



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 109

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Chair: Mr. Kelly McCauley



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC)): I call this meeting to order, with a gavel and all.

Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to meeting 109 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(c) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, October 17, 2022, the committee is meeting to consider matters related to the ArriveCAN application.

As always, this is a reminder not to have your headphones next to a microphone, as doing so can cause feedback and potential injury to our very valued interpreters.

Quickly, before we start, as was the case yesterday, Mr. Anthony's lawyer, Mr. Brent Timmons, will be present with his client, but he is not a witness and thus he may not address the committee. Counsel may be on the Zoom call with the witness and they may speak directly to their client but not to the committee or to committee members.

I would note for committee members that they should only question the witness and not speak to or ask questions of the lawyer, who is not appearing as a witness.

Mr. Anthony, if you do require time to speak to your lawyer, keep your camera on but just mute yourself and indicate that you will be conferring with the lawyer. That's fine.

My intent, as it was yesterday, is that we will do a 10-minute suspension after the first two rounds—so after about one hour—and then after the second hour, we will do a five-minute suspension.

Also my intent, as it was yesterday, is to have our clerk swear in the witness. If the committee is fine with that, we'll have our clerk go ahead with that.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Thomas Bigelow): Mr. Anthony, as per the email this morning, you have a choice between either an oath or a solemn affirmation. Please let me know which one you'd like to proceed with.

Mr. Darren Anthony (Partner, GC Strategies): I'd like an oath, please.

The Clerk: Great.

I'll read the text to you, sir, and you may respond.

Do you swear that the evidence you shall give on this examination shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

The Clerk: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Mr. Barrett, is there something?

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Yes, sir.

Before we proceed, yesterday at the end of the meeting it was clear that there was an undertaking by the witness to provide documents before nine o'clock this morning.

Mr. Firth had committed to providing us names of those he negotiated with at CBSA to write his own contract and the names of government officials who provided glowing endorsements on his website, which he had first undertaken to provide to the committee 16 months ago.

I'm wondering if you can update the committee on what's been received and when that will be circulated.

The Chair: I've received maybe about one-third or 25% of the promised information. The clerk has received it. It is going to translation, so hopefully it will be circulated tomorrow or the day after.

The balance of the information promised by nine o'clock has not been provided. We have a promise from Mr. Firth that the balance will be sent in a separate email, but we haven't received it yet. When we do, it will be translated and forwarded to the committee.

On that point, I want to bring up something. I promised to get back to the committee yesterday regarding questions put to the previous witness that were not answered.

I want to read a note directly from our law clerk.

I understand that one of the reasons given by the witness for not providing certain answers was that the matter was potentially related to an RCMP investigation.

It is up to the committee to decide whether a question should be put to the witness and whether the potential for, or an actual, police investigation is sufficient reason for not answering the question. ... That said, ultimately, it is for the committee to decide. As mentioned in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, a committee can report to the House a situation where a witness refuses to answer its question.

Basically, it is up to the committee—and not for anyone else—to decide whether that is a relevant reason not to answer.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, on that, if I may, regarding information that was requested from the witness yesterday, for example, on who provided the testimonials, are you able to tell us if that information has been furnished, even if you can't circulate it?

The Chair: No, I can't provide that specific information, because it hasn't been translated yet.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Then you're not able to tell us who was at the table when—

The Chair: Let me double-check with the clerk, but I don't think so.

Mr. Michael Barrett: —GC Strategies negotiated their own contract.

The Chair: I can't release specifics because probably about 75% of it has not been received yet.

We are going to go ahead if you're finished, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Anthony, I will give you the floor for about five minutes for your opening statement, please, sir.

Go ahead.

Mr. Darren Anthony: This is my second time before the committee. As you are aware, I have been compelled to testify here today. However, I have always been willing to answer the questions of the committee.

I understand that I have been called to appear to answer questions pertaining to the ArriveCAN study. I will answer all questions for which I have the knowledge to answer as best I can. Please understand that my inability to respond should not be misinterpreted as my not answering the question.

I was simply not involved in our federal government contracting processes with the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canadian Digital Service, the Public Health Agency of Canada or Health Canada. I have no contacts or relationships within those departments. I have no contact with any clients involved with those departments, or contracts, other than security for resources.

This has been a difficult time for me and my company. In my family, we have also had our personal privacy invaded with images and the address of our home published across the media. We have been suspended from all government contracts, and our subcontractors are not able to work under these existing contracts. My private sector work has dwindled to nothing. This will have an irreparable impact on my future and my family's future. A career that I've spent 20 years building has been ruined.

Aside from the obvious reasons for not wanting to be isolated from one another during our testimony, it's also true that we requested to give testimony together, as Mr. Firth handled all projects related to COVID and the pandemic response, so I have very little to offer as insight into this committee's current work. I was not involved in any of the contracting processes for the projects. My involvement was limited to acting as chief security officer.

As CSO, I was responsible for working with resources to obtain required documentation and file their security clearances. This includes getting their fingerprinting and document control numbers completed, setting up each of the resource's portals in the OLISS

system and helping them through the process to have their background history check done. Once the information was submitted, I would verify it and submit it. For each successful security clearance, I would receive a briefing form, which I would pass along to the resource, and I would notify Mr. Firth to confirm their eligibility for work.

Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

We'll start with Mr. Barrett, please, for six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Sir, I see that you're in the same lawyer's boardroom as your partner was yesterday. You're with the same legal counsel. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Correct.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Are you able to ask your lawyer at what time Mr. Firth will fulfill his promise to this committee to table 100% of the information that we requested by nine a.m., which is a time that he agreed to?

Can you tell us? Maybe confer with your lawyer and get us that answer.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not going to discuss my discussions with my lawyer.

Mr. Michael Barrett: At what time will the information that has been requested of a partner of your company be furnished to this committee?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not aware. I don't know.

Mr. Michael Barrett: You don't know.

Some of that information was requested 16 months ago, and there was an undertaking made then. Yesterday I told your partner that I didn't believe that he would provide by it this morning. He said that of course he'd provide it. That wasn't the case, but he proved me right.

Your partner also said yesterday that everybody was lying, except for him and you. He said the Auditor General was lying, and the procurement ombudsman, The Globe and Mail, the National Post—even the CBC and Global News. All of us were lying. He offered no proof to that effect, while we offered proof that he lied to this committee, as I just did in terms of proof, since your partner has not furnished this committee with the evidence that he said he'd undertake to provide by nine a.m.

Do you agree with Mr. Firth that the Auditor General's report is incorrect?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I would refer to his testimony with regard to the numbers that we were able to supply to the Auditor General.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Is the Auditor General's report correct or incorrect, in your assessment?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's incorrect.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The Auditor General of Canada is wrong, and you are right. That's your contention today.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: If you had the opportunity to see the testimony of your partner yesterday, you would see why I find that incredibly hard to believe. Frankly, your company's testimony hasn't been credible to our committee.

Last week, government officials announced that files concerning the role and involvement of your company, GC Strategies, in Justin Trudeau's \$60-million arrive scam have been sent to the RCMP. You said that your role is as a security expert for the company. Which information do you think was sent to the RCMP? Would it be information about résumés forged by your company, involvement in bait-and-switch procurement, as outlined by the procurement ombudsman, or bid rigging? What's the information that you believe has been forwarded to the RCMP?

• (1115)

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no idea.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Your partner, Mr. Firth, refused to say who provided testimonials on your website 16 months ago and has failed to provide them this morning. Is your testimony this morning that you are also unaware of who provided the testimonials on your website?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, I'm unaware of who provided the testimonies.

Mr. Michael Barrett: You don't know who the GoC chief information officer was who provided.... There are only six quotes on your website, and you're saying that you don't know who the chief data officer for the public sector was who provided one quote.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Michael Barrett: You're saying that you don't know who the chief data officer for Canada was who provided an endorsement of your company on your website.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Michael Barrett: You're saying that the vice-president of a major Crown corporation...that this individual is a mystery to you.

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Michael Barrett: As for the senior executive from the Government of Canada, you don't know who that was.

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Although your partner appeared at this committee 16 months ago and was asked that very same question, it didn't raise any curiosity in you, and it never came up in conversation.

Will you say today that you never discussed with your partner that committee appearance and the questions that were asked? Is that your testimony today under oath?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Can you actually clarify the question for me?

Mr. Michael Barrett: The question is this: Your partner came here 16 months ago, was asked that question, said that he was going to come back and provide the information to the committee, and appeared before a parliamentary committee. I would say that it didn't go very well.

Is your testimony today that you and he didn't discuss the information that he said he was going to provide back to the committee?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We discuss files and contracts generally, but not specifics.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Are the endorsements on your website fake, like the résumés that were provided in order to win government contracts?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no idea.

Mr. Michael Barrett: It seems, sir, that this is just part of the scam that's being perpetrated by your company on the Government of Canada and Canadian taxpayers. We'll have more questions for you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Sousa, please go ahead for six minutes, sir.

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, have you been approached by any members of this committee or any other committee before all of this, or by any elected officials? Has anybody approached you or Kristian Firth separately outside of a committee?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, they have not.

Mr. Charles Sousa: In your discussions and deliberations since this investigation has been going on, have you had discussions with the Auditor General?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I have not.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Have you had discussions with the ombudsman?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I have not.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Have you had any discussions on this matter with ministers or with members of cabinet?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not at all.

Mr. Charles Sousa: In your deliberations and in your processes over the years, you've been.... How long have you been part of GC Strategies?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I've been there since 2015, when we started the company.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Were you a partner in previous companies in operations in this procurement process?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I worked for previous companies, but I was not a partner in those companies.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Who did you work for prior to GC Strategies?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I worked for Veritaaq and a company called i4C Consulting.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You worked with Kristian Firth at Veritaaq. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's where I met him, yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Then you both together became partners and purchased Coredal?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I left Veritaaq around 2010 and went to a different company, and then we met up again in 2015.

• (1120)

Mr. Charles Sousa: Then you have an equity stake in GC Strategies.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Absolutely.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You're a principal. It's just you and Kristian Firth at GC Strategies.

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yet you have not been involved in sourcing contracts. That's all been Kristian Firth—or have you been engaged in sourcing opportunities?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm engaged in sourcing opportunities. I work in the private sector and in different federal government accounts. We don't work in the same accounts.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Your accounts are separate from Kristian Firth's.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Are you saying that when the contracts were established for ArriveCAN and so forth, you weren't part of those discussions?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I was not part of those discussions.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You are the chief security officer, so it is part of your responsibility to vet the subcontractors, as I understand. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, that's correct. I would have processed the security clearances for any resource that worked under those contracts.

Mr. Charles Sousa: In order for them to be eligible to work on these contracts, they had to go through you.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Correct.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Did you have contact with individuals in government in regard to these contracts—

Mr. Darren Anthony: No—

Mr. Charles Sousa: —in terms of your security clearance?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. I just had contacts with the resources.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Who are the resources in government that you would have had contact with?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Oh, I didn't have contacts within the government for their resources. When I say “resources”, I mean our contractors.

Mr. Charles Sousa: When Kristian Firth sourced a contract in government, a substantive one at that, your involvement was only to make sure that subcontractors were eligible. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's exactly what I'm saying.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You had no engagement with the civil service at all.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not with those contracts, no.

Mr. Charles Sousa: But you do have contacts and relationships with other civil servants in other contracts.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I have contracts that are not related to this study, this....

Mr. Charles Sousa: Do you have ongoing contracts right now?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. We have no contracts whatsoever.

Mr. Charles Sousa: What was the last contract you had with the Government of Canada that you can recall?

Mr. Darren Anthony: They were all suspended on.... I believe it was on February 14. That was the last contract we had. We let everybody that we had know that they were no longer able to work under those contracts.

Mr. Charles Sousa: How many people were employed or contracted through this process that you worked with? How many subcontractors did you deal with?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Since 2015, there were over 200.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You had 200 individuals who were contracted on your behalf to do work for the Government of Canada through the procurement process.

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. Some of those 200 people were in the private sector.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Well, they're all subcontractors, so they're all private sector, right?

You were the contractor. You've done a deal, and now you've outsourced that opportunity to a number of other skill sets to do the work. You had about 200 of them involved at any given time.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: There's a dispute in terms of the amount. There was a previous question that just came to you about the \$19 million that was put forward by the Auditor General as being sourced by GC Strategies. Kristian Firth has said that it's only \$11.1 million or \$11.2 million. Can you verify that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: They were his contracts, so he would be reporting on those.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Sousa. We're right at six minutes.

Mrs. Vignola, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, thank you for joining us today. It certainly isn't easy. Naturally, we have a number of questions. In my case, I would like some clarifications. I want to understand how the process works in general. The goal is to improve this process so that situations of this nature don't arise again.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Mr. Anthony, your hand is up online. Is everything okay?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I just missed the first little bit. My translation wasn't working.

• (1125)

The Chair: Are you okay if we just restart?

Okay. We'll restart the clock.

Thanks, Mrs. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Anthony, thank you for coming. It can't be easy answering all our questions. Personally, I'm trying to better understand the process so that we can improve it and ensure that taxpayers' money is well spent.

You touched on your role at GC Strategies. You were in charge of security. You said that your activities had nothing to do with managing contracts or engaging with government members or officials. Lastly, you said that you received 50% of the profits. Is that right?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no relationships, as per my testimony, with the departments that I mentioned, but I do have—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: That's what I was saying. Did you ultimately receive 50% of the profits?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. At GC Strategies, we share in profits.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay, thank you.

It must be disconcerting to appear before the committee. Correct me if I'm wrong, but you fulfilled a dream by going from a salaried position to running your own company. That's no mean feat. Your company can receive a substantial amount of money, which is quite nice.

Do you have companies other than GC Strategies, such as numbered companies?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, I do have a numbered company.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Does this numbered company do business with the Government of Canada, or does it deal with completely different entities?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's with other entities completely.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay.

I'll ask you the same question that I put to Mr. Firth yesterday. We learned that a consulting firm had interests in tax havens. Do any of your companies also have interests in tax havens?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Great. Thank you.

I want to talk about the purchase of Coredal. I think that it was the start of the fulfillment of your big dream of having your own company. When you, Mr. Firth and Caleb White purchased Coredal, how many employees did the company have?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: They had no employees at that company.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Before you purchased the company, did you have any stake in it or had you worked with it?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I've worked with the company. The owner of the company was actually a consultant of mine when I was at i4C Consulting.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay.

Why did you purchase Coredal? What was the benefit? Coredal had no patents or intellectual property. You told us that the company had no employees. Did the benefit lie in the fact that Coredal had security codes and that, by integrating this company into GC Strategies, the ownership of these security codes was automatically transferred from one company to the other?

• (1130)

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, and we would get the corporate history of the company as well.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay.

When you purchased Coredal Systems Consulting and founded GC Strategies, you knew that good opportunities would come up with the Government of Canada, particularly in information technology. In the years leading up to this purchase, quite significant cutbacks had affected the government officials in this field.

How long have you known that information technology opportunities would come up? When did you realize that it would be tremendously profitable to purchase Coredal Systems Consulting to start your own company?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I guess I could say I realized it when I got into the business in 2005.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, ma'am.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, I'm joining this study partway through, so there's some testimony that I haven't been privy to. However, the picture that seems to be coming to light is one of a small company with two principals that is getting lucrative government contracts and is out there finding private sector contractors and assembling them to work on this IT project for the government.

Your partner indicated that it was a contract for around \$11 million, for which your firm received a \$2.5-million commission. All of that could seem above board, except that some of those things are not as they seem. For instance, in some cases, your company isn't actually doing the recruiting. In some cases, CBSA was doing the recruiting, finding the resources and then telling them to work through you.

More alarming is the fact that in quite a few cases, we have...essentially, your company is writing the requirements of the contract and then somehow getting the contract and also exaggerating the résumés of the resources who are going to work on the contract and, in at least one case, without the knowledge of those resources.

This is a picture that is very concerning to the public, obviously. Can you see why the picture that has been painted as a result of these hearings is of concern to the Canadian public?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I can only talk about my contracts.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I assume you're a director of GC Strategies. Is that a fair characterization?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I would be the vice-president.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You're the vice-president. Okay. You have shares in the company. What is your capacity as an owner of the company?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We are fifty-fifty owners.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: What is your fiduciary responsibility as an owner of the company? Is it only for your contracts, or is it for the entire corporate entity?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't know the answer to that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You're a half-owner of a company that does millions of dollars in government contracts and you don't know what your fiduciary responsibility is to the corporate entity.

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Well, I find that somewhat astounding.

Have you read the Auditor General's report?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have not read it, no.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You're saying that the Auditor General of Canada has audited contracts that the company you're a 50% owner of has undertaken, and you haven't read the report.

Have you read the report of the Office of the procurement ombudsman?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I have not.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You're a a director of this company and a 50% shareholder. Your company has been brought into the public limelight for potentially serious misconduct and your contracts with the government have been suspended—all of the contracts—and this is because of reports that have been written by some of the main watchdogs who work on behalf of the Canadian public. They've raised major red flags about the corporate practices of a company in which you're one of the two principals, and you haven't even read the reports.

• (1135)

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: How can you dispute the findings of the reports if you haven't read them?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I agree with the numbers that Kristian gave in testimony yesterday.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You're telling me that the statements you've made about the Auditor General's report are not based on reading the report but are based on what Kristian told you.

Mr. Darren Anthony: They're based on testimony given at these committees.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I just find it astounding that someone who works at your level and is the 50% owner of a company that has been scrutinized and brought into disrepute by the Auditor General and the Office of the Procurement Ombud and is now being looked into by the RCMP—and soon the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner is going to be looking through your business dealings—hasn't read any of these reports.

If I were an investor in this company, I would be very concerned. If I were a contractor for this company, I would be very concerned. If I were the government contracting your company, I would be incredibly concerned that you're not even following the bouncing ball when it comes to these major allegations against your company's business practices.

Can you see why that would be a concern?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Sure.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Anthony, did you ever attend any of the hospitality events for government officials that Mr. Firth referenced in the last meeting?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I did not.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Have you ever delivered gifts to government officials?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I have not.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I'm going to hand the floor back to you. I'll begin my line of questioning again in the next round.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Brock, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Like my NDP colleague, sir, I am completely astonished by your complete lack of preparation for this committee hearing. You started off in your opening statement by talking about how you and Mr. Firth had been wrongly portrayed in media, newsprint and committee hearings, by MPs and by the word on the street. You talked about the financial stresses and the emotional stresses. You don't have any concrete answers to clearly relevant questions. You very proudly stated that you stand behind the words of your partner Mr. Firth that the Auditor General's report was completely inaccurate.

How on earth could you have prepared any less for this hearing by not taking 20 minutes to read the actual report? I find it absolutely astonishing, sir. Quite frankly, it reflects very poorly on your credibility.

I want to ask you some questions for clarification.

Are you in a partnership with Firth or are you a director in a company registered either through the Canada Business Corporations Act or through the Ontario Corporations Act? What is it?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We are partners.

Mr. Larry Brock: Do you have a partnership agreement? Answer yes or no.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Can I confer with my lawyer for one second, please?

The Chair: Go ahead. Just mute yourself.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm sorry. We are a corporation, and I am a shareholder of that corporation.

Mr. Larry Brock: You're not in a partnership. You may refer to yourselves as partners, but you don't have a legal partnership agreement. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay.

You are a director. You didn't understand that directors have joint and several liability, meaning that you're both responsible for consequences of the acts of directors. Are you aware of that now, sir?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't believe that to be true.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay. Well, you can check with your lawyer on that.

Mr. Firth has put it out there in real evidence that he has committed acts of forgery, not on one occasion but on multiple occasions. That would be defined as a criminal act under the Criminal Code of Canada. He claims it was a mistake. As a former prosecutor, I can say that pretty much every accused I dealt with in the last 20-plus years always claimed they made mistakes.

You understand, sir, that ignorance of the law is no excuse. Do you understand that?

• (1140)

Mr. Darren Anthony: Sure.

Mr. Larry Brock: If Mr. Firth was willing to do that—I'm talking about the Botler complaint—on at least four or five occasions without consulting, without getting approval, without getting clearance from Botler to change the actual résumé to ensure they received a contract, it really raises the question of how many times Mr. Firth, your fifty-fifty partner director, has done that on other contracts.

Do you have an answer to that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have any knowledge of that.

Mr. Larry Brock: No. That's because what he does is up to him and what you do is up to you. Is that correct? Is that your understanding?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: I see.

Who was responsible for the design of your website, which probably fraudulently identifies several key government employees as boasting about the value of your company? Who was responsible for creating this web design?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not sure. I believe that we hired someone to build our website for us in 2015.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay. What was the company?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have that information in front of me right now.

Mr. Larry Brock: Will you supply the information to us?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I can check my records.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay.

In addition to the answers to Mr. Barrett's questions to you, you will also provide to me the names of all the government employees who are referenced on your website, boasting about your particular company. I'm going to give you seven days to do this, sir. You will do that because you don't have the answer as to who they are. However, in seven days, you'll provide me with that information, won't you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I can try to find that information for you.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bains, you have five minutes. Please go ahead.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yesterday Mr. Firth mentioned that he began working on government contracts within another company in 2007. You indicated that you met him while working within another company, but you said that you worked there up until 2010. When did you begin?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I started at Veritaaq in 2005.

Mr. Parm Bains: In what year did Mr. Firth join Veritaaq?

Mr. Darren Anthony: He joined in 2007.

Mr. Parm Bains: Then you were there prior to him.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Parm Bains: Over this time, you ultimately developed relationships with public officials who also had been working there for quite some time.

At any time, did you meet with Mr. MacDonald?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I did not.

Mr. Parm Bains: In previous questions today, you said that your only role was to verify subcontractors that were working.... What's that process? What did you do to verify those subcontractors?

Mr. Darren Anthony: For the security process, once we identify a resource need, I'll make sure that they're eligible to get a government security clearance. They have to get their fingerprints taken. They need a document security number, which is a 25-digit code that can be done by the Commissionaires. Any fingerprinting is with the RCMP.

Once they have that and the number is verified, they send it to me. They give me their personal information, and I enter it into the OLISS portal. Then it's resent to the resource. The resource completes their family history. It gets sent back to me. I review it to make sure that everything is processed, and then I submit it.

• (1145)

Mr. Parm Bains: You did your work through a portal. You didn't exchange any of this information with any public officials. You indicated that you were removed from having dealings with specific people; you were strictly operating in this in your own—

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. In that capacity, I'm only dealing with the OLISS portal. I have no contact with any officials.

Mr. Parm Bains: In your role to verify and do these security processes, at any time do you verify the people working and what their qualifications are?

We've heard from Mr. Firth himself, who personally stated that he inflated information on résumés because he had a strong understanding over the years of what requirements needed to be met in order to gain certain contracts. It was almost like a skill developed over time to obtain government contracts. He knew how to do that and knew what keywords, etc., needed to be placed into résumés. He indicated in prior testimony that this is something he did. He admitted to it.

Are you aware of that, and was it your job to verify things of that nature or whether people's skills were real or not during these security processes?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That is not a part of the security process. The security process is basically an individual's personal history and family history.

Mr. Parm Bains: Would it have been in an individual's personal history what skill set they have and what role they would be playing within government?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It would not have been within the PSPC government security clearance process.

Mr. Parm Bains: Is it simply more of a public safety or criminal record check, and these sorts of things?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's a criminal record check. I believe—you'd have to ask the RCMP what their process is—it's a full family history check as well.

Mr. Parm Bains: No, that's your process. I'm talking about your process.

You're simply submitting these people's information to other public safety agencies to ensure that they are good citizens and don't have any criminal records, and that's it.

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's it.

Mr. Parm Bains: You're not verifying who these subcontractors are with respect to what skill set they have when they're going to work on government contracts in which important sensitive information is shared.

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. I don't verify that myself.

The Chair: Ask a quick question, please, Mr. Bains.

Mr. Parm Bains: I'm sorry. How much time do I have?

The Chair: If you have a quick question, please go ahead.

Mr. Parm Bains: That's all. I'll save it for the next time. Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Bains.

We'll have Mrs. Vignola for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, you started working for Veritaaq in 2005. Later, while still at Veritaaq, you met Mr. Firth. Did you also meet Caleb White at Veritaaq?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Did you also meet Colin Wood there?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay.

You met Colin Wood, who founded Coradix Technology Consulting, where David Yeo was or used to be a director.

Is Caleb White still a partner at GC Strategies?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. Caleb is not a partner at GC Strategies.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Why did he leave GC Strategies?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's a question you'd have to ask him.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: He left without informing you or telling you why. Just like that, he walked out the door and decided to miss out on millions of dollars in contracts.

According to the Ottawa Business Journal, in 2018, your company ranked among the top four in terms of growth. It grew by 676.4% over three years, from your company's creation in 2015 to 2018.

Did Mr. White just walk out the door without any warning?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, Caleb was fully upfront with us and let us know why he was leaving. He wanted to go and pursue other options.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay. So it was just a matter of pursuing other options.

Has Wes Jarvis ever been involved in GC Strategies?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: He was an employee.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay.

Did I understand correctly that Mr. Jarvis worked for Lixar, and for BDO when BDO took over Lixar?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Can you repeat the question, please?

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Is this the same Mr. Jarvis who was a manager at Lixar, then at BDO when the company subsequently took over Lixar?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: What is the question?

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Is Mr. Jarvis, a former GC Strategies employee, the same Mr. Jarvis who worked for Lixar, a company taken over by BDO, where Mr. Jarvis now works?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, Wes Jarvis did work as an employee for GC Strategies.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, did you sign the \$13.9-million contract with the CBSA?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I did not.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You sign contracts for your projects, and Mr. Firth signs contracts for his projects. Is that roughly how it works?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: As chief security officer, are you responsible for the security clearance for not only the resources that you compile but also for GC Strategies itself?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: At the time that the \$13.9-million contract with the CBSA was signed by Mr. Firth, were you aware that there was a capability requirement for safeguarding documents associated with that contract?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I was not.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: How do you, as chief security officer, review the security requirements of contracts that Mr. Firth negotiates with the government, or do you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I do. Once we get a contract awarded, we see what is required and if we need to add any additional security.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Did you review the \$13.9-million contract for security requirements after Mr. Firth signed it?

Mr. Darren Anthony: After it was awarded, that document security clearance was not required.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I don't believe that was the case. I think that the requirement was removed something like 14 months after the document was signed. I assume that work was already taking place on the contract at that point. Is that not correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I believe work was ongoing on that project, but I don't think it required document safeguarding.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: With regard to the contract itself, the Auditor General and the procurement ombud have both found that in order to sign the contract, GC Strategies needed to have the specific security clearance. You are the chief security officer, but you were not aware of that requirement prior to Mr. Firth's signing the contract, and you did not review the contract for security requirements prior to his signing it. Is that correct?

• (1155)

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: What part of chief security officer involves the security part? I'm having trouble.... I'm struggling with this question of how you actually exercise that role with regard to the contracts that your company signs. I'm also unclear as to why you and Mr. Firth don't have separate companies, because it seems that you're not actually working on the same projects, nor are you actually exercising your role as security officer when it comes to the work that Mr. Firth is bringing in to the company. Help me understand how this all works.

The Chair: Please offer a short answer, Mr. Anthony.

Mr. Darren Anthony: The document safeguarding was not required for that contract.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Berthold, go ahead, sir. Welcome back to OGGO.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Anthony, I want to make sure that I understood you correctly. You said that you hadn't read the Auditor General's report, a devastating report for GC Strategies that resulted in this company no longer having any contracts with the Government of Canada. You expect us to believe that.

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Anthony, that's quite surprising.

As head of security, were you involved in forging the résumés of subcontractors under GC Strategies so that the company could obtain contracts from the federal government?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Can you clarify the question?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Were you involved in forging the résumés of employees of subcontractors under GC Strategies in order to obtain federal government contracts, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Do you acknowledge that your partner did this?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Why don't the résumés of subcontractors under GC Strategies reflect their real career path? People might be wondering this. Your credibility is extremely weak.

Do you acknowledge that your partner repeatedly lied to the committee about the chalet, the documents and his meetings with government officials?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Do you think that your partner told the whole truth yesterday? Were you there with him in this room?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Can you ask the question again, please?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Do you think that your partner told the whole truth yesterday, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Were you there with him in the room where you are now, when he gave his testimony?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I was not.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Did you watch your partner's testimony?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I watched pieces of his testimony.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: How can you say, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he hasn't lied at any time? Again, it's quite difficult. Your partner has called just about everyone a liar and you're here with us today. I must say that your testimony so far lacks credibility.

How much money have you personally received from federal government contracts since 2015?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: How many contracts have we received since 2015? Is that the question?

Mr. Luc Berthold: How much money did you receive personally from those contracts with the federal government?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those figures with me right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Will you commit to providing them to the committee?

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Sure.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Can you also tell us how much money you personally received from the “arrive scam” contract?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Are you committed to providing all these figures to the committee? If you fail to provide the figures requested, the committee can require you to do so. We can order the submission of your tax returns and all this information. Are you voluntarily committing to giving the committee this information?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Can someone check my translation? I'm getting some serious echo here. It's overlap I'm hearing from the member and then my translator. I can't quite pick it out.

The Chair: Actually, we are out of time for Mr. Berthold.

We have Mr. Jowhari next.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

It seems that there were many interpretation issues. The witness had a great deal of difficulty answering the questions that I asked in French. I think that it would be appropriate to give me more time to ask questions. It isn't...

[English]

The Chair: You were actually past the five-minute mark, though.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I know, but there were a lot of problems for the translation, and it's not fair for francophones.

The Chair: I accounted for that. I reset your clock to the very beginning. You were 26 seconds in when we had to interrupt, and I set it back to zero. You did have your full five minutes, I'm afraid.

We're going to go to Mr. Jowhari and then we will have our 10-minute suspension. Then I will get the clerk and the IT folks to discuss with Mr. Anthony any other translation issues. We will get those fixed.

Mr. Jowhari, please go ahead, sir.

Now we are having trouble with Mr. Jowhari.

Why don't we do our 10-minute suspension right now? We'll get the audio and everything fixed and we'll start back with Mr. Jowhari in 10 minutes or so. Thanks very much.

We are suspended.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1215)

The Chair: We're back. We're going to get going again.

Mr. Jowhari, thanks for your patience. I'm glad we have you back speaking.

Go ahead for five minutes, please, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, as the chief security officer of a Canadian corporation of which you hold a 50% share, you told us that you also share in the profit of the corporation. Am I right to understand that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay.

Yesterday Mr. Firth indicated to us that of the net revenue from the \$11.2 million that was granted to GC Strategies, GC Strategies earned \$2.5 million. Did you share, based on that, \$1.25 million of that \$2.5 million, sir?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. We share in the profits of GC Strategies.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I assume you're saying indirectly that you benefited from \$1.25 million net on that.

Can you explain to me how you share the profit, but when it comes to the risk associated with that or with any type of inclusion, you are very comfortable saying, "As the chief security officer, I do the checks on the resources, but...?"

I understand, based on Mr. Firth's testimony yesterday, that there were over 30 consultants related to ArriveCAN. You must have processed their security background, yet you do not know anything about the project and you do not know anything about the document tracking. The only thing that you've made a comment on is that document safeguarding was not a request.

Can you explain to me how you're comfortable taking \$1.25 million, but you're also very comfortable washing your hands of anything that has to do with ArriveCAN?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I can only speak about my contracts.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay. I take it that you are comfortable taking \$1.25 million, but you're not comfortable talking about other contracts. Let's talk about your contracts, then.

You said you have contracts for the private sector and you have different contracts. You have public sector contracts for different accounts. Can you give me a breakdown of how many of the total accounts under your supervision are private and how many of them are government-related?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I would say it's sixty-four for the private sector.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: It's 60% private sector and 40% public.

Of those private contracts that you have been securing, do any of them work directly or indirectly with the other 40% in the government?

Mr. Darren Anthony: On some occasions they do, yes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Are "some occasions" 80%, 40%, 10% or 1%?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'd say 10%.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: It's 10%. Okay.

Aside from the accounts that Mr. Firth holds, can you tell me what departments you hold accounts with in the Government of Canada? Which departments do you have a relationship with?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We don't hold any contracts with the Government of Canada at the moment.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Can you tell me what contracts you held before that as part of that 40%?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Sure. I could get that information to you.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: You've been doing this since 2015. Can you give me the top three departments that you worked with?

Mr. Darren Anthony: They were DND, Agriculture Canada and Global Affairs.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay.

Did Mr. Firth, at any time, work on any of those accounts?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not to my knowledge.

• (1220)

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Did you have documentation safeguarding as part of the work you were doing in those three departments?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. We've never had document safeguarding in our history.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: You've never had document safeguarding in your history, regardless of the department you were working with. You are saying it was because PSPC did not request it of you guys, or you did not understand that it was a requirement. Am I right to understand that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have any knowledge of PSPC's processes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: You don't have any knowledge of PSPC's processes, yet you signed contracts 40% of the time with three different departments. I find it very hard to believe, sir, that you don't understand the PSPC process regarding the safeguarding of documents or anything else while you're signing 40% of your contracts.

I'll be getting another turn and I'll be following along those lines.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Jowhari.

Mrs. Block, please go ahead for five minutes.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Anthony, the Auditor General found that GC Strategies was involved in the development of a contract from the Government of Canada valued at \$25 million. Your firm received that in May 2022.

Now, I know you've tried to build a bit of a firewall between your contracts and Mr. Firth's contracts by saying that they are separate, but it is my understanding that in your role as the chief security officer, you provide him with support when it comes to security assessments. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: You mean with regard to security assessments?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Yes.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: In setting the criteria for the contracts that GC Strategies ultimately won, did you provide any advice to Mr. Firth on the security requirements for that contract?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Why did you not? If that's your role at GC Strategies, why would you not have provided him with any advice on that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I was not asked.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Do you only provide advice when you're asked? It's not a given that in your role as the chief security officer, you would be providing that support?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I only give knowledge when asked.

Mrs. Kelly Block: As a fifty-fifty partner, do you receive 50% of the commission that is earned on Mr. Firth's contracts?

Mr. Darren Anthony: At GC Strategies we share in the profits, yes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: You share in the profits but not in providing advice when it's actually your job to do so. Okay. I get that, I guess, or maybe I don't.

In your role, you would identify resources and then notify Mr. Firth about the eligibility of the subcontractors. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Would Mr. Firth ever ask you to change anything?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Would you ever notify him of any discrepancies or any wrongdoing?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Absolutely.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Have you had to in the past?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Never.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Would he ever ask you to overlook anything?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I'm now going to refer to the Auditor General's report. That's the one that you and Mr. Firth are disputing, but you have admitted that you haven't read it yet. I'm turning to page 18.

In her report, the Auditor General identifies some issues with security clearance and some task authorizations for GC Strategies. I'll just quote it for you:

The Canada Border Services Agency issued 2 task authorizations for cybersecurity assessments of the application under 2 of the GC Strategies contracts valued at approximately \$743,000. The task authorizations required that resources have a reliability security status.

What the Auditor General found was the following:

[T]hat security assessments were completed for ArriveCAN in a pre-development environment by subcontractors under GC Strategies.... However, [they] found that some resources that were involved in the security assessments were not identified in the task authorizations and did not [receive] security clearance....

In addition, the agency received invoices for resources listed on the task authorizations. However, it was unable to provide any supporting documentation to confirm that work related to the security assessments was performed by 4 of the 5 resources listed.

Wouldn't that be part of your job?

• (1225)

Mr. Darren Anthony: All of the resources that we provided under those contracts had security clearances.

Mrs. Kelly Block: So you're once again disputing the Auditor General's report with regard to what she found.

Mr. Darren Anthony: What I can tell you is that all of GC Strategies' resources who worked on the contract had a security clearance.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Again, the Auditor General found that the agency "was unable to provide any supporting documentation to confirm that work related to the security assessments was performed by 4 of the 5 resources listed." That's a pretty high percentage lacking documentation to confirm that security assessments were conducted.

I would suggest, sir, that you read the Auditor General's report before you actually dispute what's in it. Perhaps, again, as a director or a fifty-fifty partner in this company, you would seek to understand some of the allegations that are being levelled against your company.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, Mrs. Block.

I'm sorry. We're out of time for a response, sir, but I'm sure we'll get back to it in another intervention.

Ms. Sidhu, you're next, please. Welcome to OGGO.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will pass my time to Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Madam Sidhu.

Mr. Anthony, let's talk about the number of RFPs.

You told us that the business that you bring to GC Strategies is split, with 60% being private and 40% being government. You highlighted that national defence, agriculture and transportation are three areas that you hold as part of your account portfolio within the government. Since 2015, when you formed GC Strategies, how many RFPs in general in those departments have you responded to, and what was GC Strategies' success rate?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We ran some numbers yesterday, and I believe that we submitted over 200 RFPs. I believe our win rate was around 15% to 20%.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: That's good. It looks like you were watching the testimony. That's good, because you indicated earlier that you had watched part of that testimony. It looks like you were watching that part of the testimony, which is good.

With regard to the 15% to 20% win rate, what's your win rate on the private side?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me. I would assume that it's probably a little bit higher, at 20% to 25%.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay.

Can you tell us how much effort goes into preparing an RFP? For 100 RFPs.... You did over 200 RFPs at a 15% win rate. That's about

30, which by my math doesn't add up, since you had 60 to 65 contracts with the government, so there's some way that the math doesn't add up. I will leave that for another round.

On your percentage of.... You talked about the other 20%.

Let's go back to 2005. In your earlier response to one of the questions, you said that you saw a trend as early as 2005. Can you tell me exactly what you saw that trend to be? What was the driver that you saw in 2015 that made you say, "Oh, my God; this is a perfect time to start this company"?

• (1230)

Mr. Darren Anthony: In 2005, I started as a recruiter. I started in the business at that time. I didn't realize the trend immediately, but I knew that I enjoyed doing the work and it was a good way to make money.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: When you say that it was a good way to make money, naturally you saw the margins that your firm at the time, where you were an employee, was making. I'm sure that you were privy to that. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I was not privy to the margins of those companies.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Then how do you know it's a good way to make money?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I was speaking personally for myself, based on salary.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Oh. What you meant was that by transitioning and becoming a company owner, you would make more money than this salary. However, at no time, based on what you're claiming, did you have a preview into the margins that those sub-contractors were making.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Depending on the contracts awarded, you could see that there was a margin involved in an RFP win.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Can you tell me, based on 2005 to 2015, what kind of margin was there?

Mr. Darren Anthony: At that time, I believe it was an average of 20% to 25%.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: That's what you saw there. Why 2015? Why not 2010? Why not 2017?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's a great question.

I guess at that time in our lives we decided that we could try to do this ourselves. It was right for our families, and we took a chance at starting a company. It worked up until a couple of months ago.

The Chair: That's our time, sir.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay. Thank you, sir.

The Chair: We'll go to Mrs. Vignola, please, for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, yesterday Mr. Firth told us that preparing account statements and meetings with the government, for example, required at most a few dozen hours of work per month, or from 40 to 80 hours. How many hours a month did it take you just to fill out the security paperwork?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm the chief security officer, but I also get my own business. I work on private sector accounts.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I'm talking about ArriveCAN, about the security paperwork. How many hours per month did you have to work to earn \$625,000 a year?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no idea.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Was it 10, 20 or 100 hours per month?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Again, I don't know.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: You really lived the ultimate dream: you had one job and you did not need to look into the contracts, but you made substantial profits. That's not the American dream anymore, it's the Canadian dream.

When you worked at Veritaaq, did you meet certain people, for example David Yeo?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I see.

You said that Mr. Colin Wood was a contact and that he later founded Coradix, with which you also did business.

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I worked with Colin Wood at Veritaaq.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Very well.

You also worked with BDO Lixar.

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't know that name.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, you previously said you're responsible for the security clearance not only of the resources but also of GC Strategies. How do you exercise that responsibility?

• (1235)

Mr. Darren Anthony: Can you clarify the question? You said for the resources....

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: No, I mean for the company as a whole. You're the chief security officer for the whole company and you're responsible for GC Strategies' security clearance. How do you exercise that responsibility?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We have a secret facility clearance, and I maintain that. We follow the guidelines set out by PSPC.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You said earlier that the \$13.9-million contract did not require document safeguarding capability. How do you know this?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's based on past testimony. I noticed yesterday that—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Is that past committee testimony?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Referring to the \$13.9-million contract, the Office of the Procurement Ombud stated:

The contract stated "the Contractor must, at all times during the performance of the Contract, hold a valid Designated Organization Screening (DOS) with approved Document Safeguarding at the level of Protected B."

Did your company hold that security clearance—

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, we did not.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: —at the time when it was signed?

Why did you say earlier that the contract didn't require document safeguarding when in fact it did?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Those words are PSPC's words. I'm not aware.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I don't think so. This is in the contract itself. This is the Office of the Procurement Ombud citing the contract.

These are the words from the report:

The contract stated "the Contractor must, at all times during the performance of the Contract, hold...approved Document Safeguarding at the level of Protected B."

I guess what's shocking, Mr. Anthony, is that you're the chief security officer and this is a security issue and we're talking about matters of national security, and yet you weren't familiar with the requirements of the contract at the time when your partner signed it.

It comes back to my earlier question about how you actually carry out your responsibilities as a chief security officer or whether this is just a title that you guys created. You divvied up the titles and you became chief security officer, but you don't actually do any chief security officer things.

I'm struggling to understand how you failed to provide this basic level of oversight—

The Chair: That's your time, Mr. Bachrach. We'll have to allow a bit of time for a response from Mr. Anthony.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no response.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We'll have Mr. Genuis for five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Anthony, you really had me at “I didn't read the Auditor General's report.” This report was tabled more than a month ago. Your company has faced grievous consequences, which you have described, because of this report. You've been required to testify, in large part because of the findings in this report, and this report is feeding into an RCMP investigation that could result in criminal charges against your long-term business partner and against you.

Mr. Anthony, this report is merely 36 pages. At no point did you think that maybe you should read this thing?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I did not.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Anthony, why are you lying to this committee?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not lying to this committee. I swore an oath.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You did, sir.

What do you think you have to gain by claiming that you didn't read the Auditor General's report?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have nothing to gain.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Why are you making this claim when it's clearly not true?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It is true.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sir, how much time did you spend preparing for this hearing today?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not a whole lot.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Roughly, though, how much time did you spend preparing for this hearing?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It was a couple of hours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

You didn't think, as part of that preparation, that you should read the Auditor General's report?

• (1240)

Mr. Darren Anthony: It was against my doctor's wishes for me to be working. I have not been working since the start of December.

We sent our doctor's notes. He's advised us not to work.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Your doctor advised you not to read the Auditor General's report?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, he advised me not to work, in order to lower my stress.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sir, in the couple of hours you spent preparing, you didn't read the Auditor General's report and you came here and you disputed its findings based on what Kristian Firth had told you.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Anthony, I don't believe you, first of all.

Second, I have a hard time making sense of your motivations. Mr. Firth is under a serious cloud of suspicion—suspicion involving events that you claim you don't have any knowledge about.

With that in mind, are you committed to standing by Mr. Firth, to believing everything he tells you, regardless of what this investigation reveals?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I've known Kristian Firth since 2007. We've been business partners since 2015. He's an honest, trustworthy, hard-working man and parent. I've no doubt he's done nothing wrong and I'm confident that all independent investigations will establish that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Were you reading what you just said, sir, or were you speaking from the heart?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I was speaking from the heart.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sir, I don't even know what to say.

This is so ridiculous. Is it not obviously ridiculous to you? You've come before this committee. You've been summoned here. You would have been arrested by the Sergeant-at-Arms if you hadn't shown up. You're telling us that you did two hours of preparation, that you didn't read the Auditor General's report, and that you're committed to standing by everything Mr. Firth tells you, even though you had allegedly no involvement in the events that could lead to criminal charges.

Is that what is happening?

Mr. Anthony, I have one other question in the time I have left.

What is your relationship with David Yeo? Do you know him? Do you have conversations with him?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I've never had a conversation with him. I don't know him.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

You are supposed to manage security processes for the company.

Have you ever, in the course of your time working for Kristian Firth, provided any push-back or raised concerns about things he's suggested in terms of contracts, contractors or processes, or have you not?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have not.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You affirm, approve and rubber-stamp the things that Mr. Firth provides to you.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't approve things that he.... I'm not sure where you're...what the question is.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: This is a strange partnership.

The Chair: That is our time, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Sousa, go ahead, please, sir.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Anthony, you're a 50% owner of this company. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You've made that clear.

You share 50% of the profits generated from the contracts as well. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: In those costs associated with a particular contract, if Mr. Firth has sourced the contract for ArriveCAN, does he charge himself a salary or a fee prior to sharing the profits with you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Therefore when he does a \$10-million deal or \$20-million deal and you do a \$1-million deal, you share in the \$20-million deal equally with Mr. Firth and he shares in the \$1-million deal that you do on your own. Is that how it works?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, in most cases.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You're benefiting quite a bit from this association with Mr. Firth if he's doing all the work, if he's providing and sourcing the contracts, if he's the one who's having deliberations, and you're saying you're just the guy who stamps and does the fingerprinting. Is that what you're saying? He actually sources a lot of revenue for you.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, and I focus on my work.

Mr. Charles Sousa: In terms of the work by GC Strategies, how much of the profits are generated by you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me.

• (1245)

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Firth explained yesterday that he got \$2.5 million as the net result of his engagement with ArriveCAN over that two-year period. Did you gain a \$2.5-million net return on your contracts?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me right now.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You don't know if you're equally contributing to the generation of profits for the company.

Are you and he equal partners in terms of revenue generation?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: All right, so you did equally the same amount of work that Mr. Firth did for GC Strategies in this period of time in making that profit.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't know that answer.

Mr. Charles Sousa: When were you at Veritaaq? How long were you at Veritaaq? When did you start?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I started there in 2005 and I left in 2010.

Mr. Charles Sousa: What happened at Veritaaq around that time? Are you aware of the bid-rigging allegations and the issues that occurred?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: What happened with Veritaaq? Were they charged? Did they plead guilty? Explain to us what took place.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I am not sure. I believe I had left the company. I don't know what happened with that whole scenario.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You were there and you weren't aware how—

Mr. Darren Anthony: I was there as a recruiter. I was not involved in any of those accounts that were in question at that time. I was not investigated.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You have not been in touch with any investigators as a result of this ongoing issue. Over the last six months, have any investigators called you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Charles Sousa: There have been a lot of deliberations and a lot of considerations given to the value of your and Mr. Firth's contribution to the program. In essence, why do you exist? Why is it that we need you and Mr. Firth to provide services? You're not doing the service; you're providing the skill sets. You're assembling teams of people.

Explain to us why that's worth 20% or 10%.

Mr. Darren Anthony: We were asked to do a job for a price and we did it.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Did you bid on that price? I understand that this one may not have been bid on. How did this one come to be—these last two or three that are in question?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Do you mean on my contracts?

Mr. Charles Sousa: No, I mean on ArriveCAN, on these contracts with ArriveCAN. How did those contracts come to be?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Charles Sousa: How do your contracts come to be?

Mr. Darren Anthony: My contracts come out of RFPs. All of the contracts I've been awarded have been competed for.

An RFP comes out on the street. I read it and see if we have a partner network or resources that would be interested in bidding on the opportunity. I speak with those resources, clarify that our corporate requirements meet those of that department, put together a bid, submit it, and if we are awarded the contract, we execute on the contract.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That is our time.

Mr. Barrett, please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Your numbered company—what is it?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Pardon me?

Mr. Michael Barrett: You have a numbered company. What is the company?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't see how that's relevant.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Well, first of all, it's relevant because I've asked. It's also important that we have an understanding of your business dealings.

I've asked the question, and you're obligated to answer it.

What is the numbered company, sir?

Mr. Darren Anthony: The numbered company owns my shares.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The numbered company owns your shares.

Is it registered in Canada?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Is Kristian Firth a part of this numbered company?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The shares you're referring to are in GC Strategies.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Does it hold shares in any other company?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

• (1250)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Do you have any business abroad? Do you own any interest in companies outside of Canada?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Do you know if Kristian Firth has any businesses outside of Canada?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Michael Barrett: You don't know, or he doesn't have them?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't know.

Mr. Michael Barrett: You're the chief security officer of GC Strategies. Can you testify that the ArriveCAN app was totally secure and that the data that was collected was totally secure?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Are you the chief security officer for GC Strategies?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Did GC Strategies work on ArriveCAN?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The Auditor General says that your company was paid nearly \$20 million on a \$60-million project, and you don't have any knowledge of it as one of two people in a two-person company. Your role specifically is chief security officer of GC Strategies, and your testimony is that you have no knowledge of the security of the data that was collected and whether it was secure.

Mr. Darren Anthony: The security data that I collected is secure.

Mr. Michael Barrett: What is the data that you collected?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's people's personal information. It could be passports—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Are you talking about the users of the app or are you talking about contractors on the app?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm talking about contractors on the app.

Mr. Michael Barrett: As the chief security officer for GC Strategies, you have no idea about where ArriveCAN data was stored.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Absolutely not.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Do you know if anyone outside of Canada worked on the app?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Would you say you did more or less work than Kristian Firth did on ArriveCAN?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I would say less.

Mr. Michael Barrett: He said he did about 10 hours a week, so are you saying you did less than 10 hours a week for \$1.25 million?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I work full time. I don't work by the hour.

Mr. Michael Barrett: On this contract, your partner said that he worked 40 hours per month to earn \$2.5 million, of which you say you receive 50%.

The question is about work on this app. You said you worked less than Mr. Firth did, and he said he worked less than 10 hours a week. Is that accurate for you as well, on ArriveCAN?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I did not work on the app.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Yes, there seems to be a lot of that with your company. It seems that you gentlemen were made millionaires by Canadians, and you didn't do any actual work on Justin Trudeau's \$60-million arrive scam. You've come here today and you have no answers.

You expressed that you were concerned about the impact this has on your other business. I think the people who contracted you to do business would be concerned as well after seeing your inability to articulate what it is your company does and how you exercise your role as chief security officer.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Jowhari, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, I'll go back to three periods—2005 to 2010, 2010 to 2015, and the passion found at the time from 2015 to the present.

What kind of trend did you see between 2005 to 2010, and then 2010 to 2015, and then 2015 forward, around requests for either outsourcing or staff augmentation as it relates to the government?

• (1255)

Mr. Darren Anthony: I did definitely notice an increase from 2010 to 2015.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Was that because you were working in a different capacity between 2010 and 2015?

Mr. Darren Anthony: This is in relation to trends. Is that correct?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. My network got larger during that period. I got a better understanding of the business and I could notice that there was more contracting coming out of the federal government.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Between 2010 and 2015, what do you think the driver was? Do you think that the driver somehow peaked at 2015, and you said, "Oh, my God, this is great. Let me jump on it."?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not really. If I were going to pick a year, there seemed to be an influx somewhere between 2012 and 2013, I would guess.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: What would you attribute that influx to? You were monitoring the market because you wanted to place people and you're saying you saw an influx. Did you ever look into why the influx was coming?

Mr. Darren Anthony: There were more and more RFPs available for bid, for tender, on the streets.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: They were from the Government of Canada.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: That was in 2012 and 2013. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's right. Yes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Have you any observation around departments or government at that time making decisions that you could recall that would impact that? I'm trying to use my words very carefully.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not that I recall, no.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Is it possible that the government at the time during that period got rid of a lot of [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: We've lost you, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] civil servants, and therefore, by default, to maintain a very old system, they had to go out—

The Chair: Mr. Jowhari, could you just start at the beginning of that last question, please?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes.

Can you hear me now, sir?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I can hear you.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay.

Is it possible that during that period, a correlation exists between the fact that the government of that time, in the interest of potentially balancing the budget, got rid of a lot of civil servants and a lot of intelligence—or a lot of capacity, let's say—and then had to compensate for that by going out and outsourcing for staff augmentation?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not sure about that.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Is it a possibility, or are you not sure? You're in this business. You've been in this business since 2005. You find the aspiration to register a company in 2015. Because of your network, you and your partner have done well among the 636 companies, but you're not watching trends and you're not making observations. Am I hearing you right?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. I do watch trends and I do make observations.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay. What was your observation during that period and what is your observation from 2015 until now?

Mr. Darren Anthony: My observation at that time was that there were more and more RFPs available for tender on...at that time, it was Buyandsell.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: How about from 2015 to the present?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It would be, I guess, status quo.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: “Status quo” means what? Were the RFP numbers the same as they were during 2012 and 2013? I don't understand.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me, what the actual numbers were—

Mr. Majid Jowhari: We're talking about trends. You've told me that since 2015 you've had 200 contracts, and you're telling me that—

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. We made 200 submissions for RFPs. We did not have 200 contracts.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay. You made 200 submissions for RFPs. You're telling me the win rate was 15%. That would be about 30 contracts. You've secured 60 to 65 contracts, which is nearly 35% to 40%. Some numbers do not make sense to me, sir. As an owner of a business that has proven to be successful, I would strongly suggest that you be prepared for the next round of questions that I'm going to ask and be able to talk about those trends and what you've made as an observation.

I think my time is up.

• (1300)

The Chair: Yes, it is.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Vignola is next, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, I will ask you a simple question: when it comes to ArriveCAN, do you know how much you earned, how much went into one of your bank accounts or the other? Do you know? I'm not even asking you for the amount. I just want to know if you know how much you earned.

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: You are a business owner with repeat contracts, specifically with the Government of Canada, but you don't know how much you earn for a living. You have two other numbered companies. Things are going marvellously well. I would love to be so rich that I don't have to be worried about how much I earn and how I spend it. I'm sorry, but that's mind-boggling, at the very least.

You mentioned opportunities that started to present themselves in 2012 or 2013. Does that line up with the IT layoffs happening at that time?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not sure. It could be.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Okay, that must be one of the many coincidences this committee has seen over the last few weeks.

Stop me if I'm mistaken. Before buying Coredal Systems Consulting, you were a paid employee at Veritaaq until 2010. You then went to i4C Consulting. Is that right?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: How does one go from being a paid employee to someone who buys a company for its security clearances? Did you use another company as a financial backer and dissolve it afterwards? Has does it work?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Well, basically, how we started the company was that we were entrepreneurs and we decided to take a risk and invest our money to purchase Coredal.

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's our time.

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Anthony, PSPC suspended your company's security clearance. I imagine that this news gave you quite a bit of concern as chief security officer. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. Actually, we cancelled Mr. Firth's security clearance the day before. He was a key security officer for the company, and we cancelled his clearance then. We were aware that we were going to lose our security clearance for the company.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Wait—I'm a little bit confused. Mr. Firth was the chief security officer?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, he's a key security officer.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: He is a key security officer, and you're the chief security officer, and because you knew you were going to lose your company's security clearance, he pre-emptively cancelled his security clearance?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We knew we weren't able to do business with the Government of Canada. We were suspended from everything. Our company's security clearance was irrelevant and we would never be using it, so we deleted his clearance, knowing we were going to lose our clearance.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Does the company have security clearance in addition to Mr. Firth's own personal security clearance?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. I still have my personal security clearance, I believe.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: When PSPC suspended your company's security clearance, what did that mean? What were they suspending?

Mr. Darren Anthony: They were suspending us from being able to get anybody a security clearance or hold on to anyone's security clearance.

• (1305)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Has PSPC suspended Mr. Firth's security clearance?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, his security clearance has been terminated.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: And yours has not?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It has not, to my knowledge.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That's interesting.

As chief security officer, were you concerned about the loss of Mr. Firth's security clearance?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. We were aware this was going to happen. We actioned it.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Did you communicate with PSPC about the revocation of security clearance?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Does the fact that you still have your own personal security clearance mean that you can still approve the clearance of resources that work on projects?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Why not?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's because we don't have any government contracts. We don't have any government contractors. For me to get into the system.... I would not be able to process anyone's clearance because I don't have access.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm sorry, sir, but you'll have a couple more rounds.

Mr. Brock, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Anthony, does it concern you that Mr. Firth actively engaged in acts of fraud and forgery in relation to the Botler contract? Furthermore, are you concerned by his evidence at committee that it was a standard practice of his to take a look at various résumés with respect to other contracts and to match those to the requirements set out by the government? To me as a former prosecutor, that just spells out another word for "criminality".

On a personal level, sir, does it concern you that your partner has been engaged in criminal acts, yes or no?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't think he did.

Mr. Larry Brock: You are defending his actions. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I don't think he did.

Mr. Larry Brock: Are you defending his actions, sir? Are you saying that what he did with respect to Botler in changing their résumés without their consent and engaging in that same sort of practice with other contractors was entirely acceptable by your standards?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't think he did that.

Mr. Larry Brock: He said he did.

That's fine. You're defending him. I have you on record. That's an important point that perhaps you might want to discuss with your counsel.

Now, you'll have to forgive me as well, sir, but in your opening statement you wanted the public to have some sympathy for the situation that your company, GC Strategies, is now facing in terms of financial hardship. According to public accounts data, GC Strategies has received \$59 million in federal funding from all federal departments combined since 2017. If we take your commission value of 15% at the lowest all the way to 30% at the highest, it means that since 2017, over the last seven years, you and Firth have received \$8.85 million at the 15% mark or up to \$17.7 million at the highest mark. That's roughly \$4.4 million to you, sir, or up to \$8.8 million.

Now, in light of the very poor fiscal policies that Justin Trudeau has adopted since 2015 and the affordability crisis that Canadians are facing, you will probably understand that no Canadian has any sympathy for you, sir, in the situation you're in, because that amount of money is something that is almost akin to winning the taxpayer lottery. I'm not asking for a response, but I want you to consider, sir, that you have been rewarded very handsomely on the backs of Canadian taxpayers.

This will be my last line of questioning: What did you actually do in the grand total of two hours to prepare for this meeting, aside from talking to Kristian Firth? What did you do? What did you review?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I reviewed my own contracts.

Mr. Larry Brock: Did you think that someone at this committee would be asking about your contracts with the Government of Canada?

• (1310)

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's all I know.

Mr. Larry Brock: That's all you know. You don't know anything about your partner's involvement with the Government of Canada and all of the allegations against him? You didn't think that there would be other questions related to your involvement with Kristian Firth?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Well, I figured that there would be questions related to Kristian Firth. I was surprised that—

Mr. Larry Brock: Did Kristian Firth tell you what to say today, sir?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not at all.

Mr. Larry Brock: Do you always believe what Mr. Firth says to you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I trust him. Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Do you always believe what he says to you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I trust him, yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: If he said to you, and I guess he did say to you that he disagrees with the Auditor General's report, you took that at face value without conducting any independent investigation on your own.

I often tell my 14-year-old twin daughters, "If you're going to do what friends say you're going to do, are you going to jump off a bridge to do that as well?" Do you ever push back on your business acquaintance or business partner, Mr. Firth?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Have I ever pushed back?

Mr. Larry Brock: Yes.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay.

In this particular case, you didn't think that a very explosive document by an auditor who has been in the business of auditing for decades.... You have no auditing experience, do you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Larry Brock: Firth has no auditing experience, right?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't think so, no.

Mr. Larry Brock: If Firth says, "We disagree with everything that she has said," you will always accept that at face value.

Mr. Darren Anthony: He has knowledge.

Mr. Larry Brock: He has knowledge.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Sousa, go ahead. Then we will do our second suspension.

Go ahead, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have only a few questions. Then I'm going to move my motion prior to our suspension, if that's okay.

Mr. Anthony, I think reference was just made about the name of your company. Is it called Government of Canada Strategies, or is it called GC Strategies?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's GC Strategies Incorporated.

Mr. Charles Sousa: It's not called "Government of Canada Strategies Incorporated". You're not operating under that name. You're operating under GC Strategies.

Mr. Darren Anthony: We operate under GC Strategies. That's our legal name.

Mr. Charles Sousa: We understand yesterday from Mr. Firth that you picked GC Strategies, the initials, for what reason?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We just thought that it would be good to call it.... We would say that GC Strategies means Government of Canada.

Mr. Charles Sousa: That's fair enough.

When you purchased Coredal, at the time you were both equal partners in the investment. Equal amounts of money were contributed.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, and we had another business partner at the time.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Have you owned any other companies prior to GC Strategies?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Is this your first foray as an entrepreneur and a shareholder?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Some of my colleagues have questioned you and pressed you pretty hard on the fiduciary duty that you have as a director and part owner of this company. I would suggest that you, with your counsel, look into some of the requirements in the corporate nature that you represent, and you have quite a bit of exposure here.

We all find it rather odd that you don't have knowledge or an understanding of these consequences. Are you telling us that you and Mr. Firth don't discuss the legal implications or the accusations being made against you by this investigation?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. We discuss files and contracts generally, but not specifics.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Okay.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to move a motion that's been tabled already.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I believe there may be an amendment to it by one of our colleagues.

The motion reads:

That the Committee invites the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, to appear for one hour and a half, as well as officials, to appear for two hours regarding the 2023-2024 Supplementary Estimates (C), the 2024-2025 Main Estimates, and the 2024-25 Departmental Plans, and that the meeting take place on Wednesday, March 20th, 2024.

• (1315)

The Chair: Thanks.

Before I start, can I just get you to confirm this, Mr. Sousa? The intent is we'll have the two ministers side by side for an hour and a half, with their officials with them for two hours.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes.

The Chair: They will be there on Wednesday from 4:30 until six. The two ministers will be there from 4:30 to six, and their officials will be there from 4:30 to 6:30.

Is that the intent?

Mr. Charles Sousa: The intent would be for them to be available side by side throughout that period of time.

The Chair: Right, but the officials will be here from 4:30 until 6:30, and the ministers from 4:30 to six. Am I reading that right?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes.

The Chair: Thanks.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, are we able to allow the witness the five minutes offered to him to confer with his legal counsel while we have this debate?

The Chair: I still intend to suspend for a few minutes after, regardless.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Okey-doke.

The Chair: Mr. Anthony, if you wish to turn off your mic and take a break, you may, because this will take a few minutes, and then we'll officially suspend.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Chair, can I suggest that we not do the suspension and we tell Mr. Anthony he can have 10 to 15 minutes?

The Chair: No. Thank you, though.

Mrs. Vignola, go ahead, please, on the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I would like to move a friendly amendment to add Ms. Erin O'Gorman from the Canada Border Services Agency to the list of witnesses in the main motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: You would like an amendment to add the president of the CBSA on the estimates, departmental plans and the supplementary estimates.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Exactly.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's at the same time.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Genuis had his hand up on the original motion.

Do we have anyone who wishes to speak on the amendment?

I take it we're fine with the amendment, then. Perfect.

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We're back on the amended motion.

Do you still wish to speak on that, Mr. Genuis?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I do. Yes.

The Chair: Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I think what we've seen consistently from Liberals, frankly, across committees is that they want to really limit and constrain the amount of time we have as members to hear from ministers. This is a very significant curtailment of time.

Frankly, if this is about respecting the time of ministers, they don't need to appear side by side. We can hear from them for a longer period of time in total so that we have a chance to ask each of them questions. I don't see any logic in having two ministers appear on both the supplementary estimates and the main estimates all at once, and limiting that to such a relatively short period of time. This is just a part of Liberal efforts to limit the amount of real exposure for their ministers to have to respond to questions.

We're in the midst of this explosive scandal involving government procurement. We've been told that ministers effectively don't do very much when it comes to the actual processes of the procurement involved. I think we have a lot of questions for which we need answers. The fact that the Liberals are proposing a motion to so severely limit the opportunity that we have to ask ministers questions doesn't make any sense in the middle of another witness's testimony,

What I would propose as a starting point is a simple amendment to add the word "each" in front of the word "appear" and then "separately" after the word "appear". That would read "to each appear separately for one hour and a half" to emphasize that if the minister is saying, "I'm so busy. I have only an hour and a half to appear before the committee," each minister should appear on their own to answer questions so that the committee is able to get more questions answered with the same allocation of each minister's time.

That's a very reasonable amendment that reflects the parameters of time that ministers have, and it is not the kind of draconian limiting of accountability that is proposed in the original motion.

• (1320)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Genuis. I'll take a speaking list on that.

I will note, however, that as chair and someone who has been on OGGO for a long time, I'm a bit concerned about this. Traditionally, we've always had one full hour for the supplementary estimates and one full hour on the main estimates. Now we're actually reducing it quite significantly. Being an estimates geek, I'm a bit concerned.

Mr. Sousa, go ahead on Mr. Genuis's amendment.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Now we're dealing with a new amendment to combine them.

We understand that the ministers are appearing and that they want to make every effort to engage with respect to what's happening, but the degree of availability and the degree of deliberation that we've had thus far have been extensive. The ministers are trying to accommodate the activity and the engagement with the committee and there are going to be other opportunities for the ministers to appear. We just want to make certain that the value and the execution of that time are productive for all of us.

Yes, this is what we're proposing. We're proposing to make them available as necessary to our committee, as they are going to be to others. I would propose to move forward in the way it was already established with the amendment provided by Mrs. Vignola, without adding "each".

Thank you.

The Chair: I have Mrs. Block, and then we'll go back to Mr. Genuis.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It would seem to me that there is some confusion with regard to the invitation to ministers to appear before the committee.

It is my understanding that we are inviting them to appear before the committee to answer any questions that this committee has about the supplementary estimates and the main estimates; that we

are not inviting them here, at this point in time, to speak about ArriveCAN; and that, in keeping with what has been tradition, we are inviting them for an hour each to speak to us about the supplementary estimates and the main estimates.

I think Mr. Sousa is confused.

The Chair: Thanks.

Now we have Mr. Genuis and then Mr. Bains.

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

Those are excellent points by my colleague.

I'll just add something in terms of respecting the ministers' time. I understand that ministers are busy people. If we're being told that the ministers have that much time on that particular day, then let's use their time well by having them appear separately. That's all my amendment does. It doesn't, in any way, affect the amount of time that they're going to spend on that particular day; it's just that they will spend the time separately so that we can hear from both and hear answers, or at least responses, from both.

That is very reasonable in terms of balancing what, apparently, their scheduling requirements are with a legitimate expectation of democratic accountability.

The Chair: Thanks.

Next we have Mr. Bains and then Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Parm Bains: In order to hear from the ministers...

I think Mr. Genuis indicated that they actually aren't involved, day to day, in the procurement process and that we have other staff—deputy ministers, etc.—who also can come at the same time to answer the questions that are posed.

I think that is an ample amount of time if both ministers can appear at the same time.

The Chair: Thanks.

Before we go to Mr. Jowhari, I just want to be clear that, again, this is the ministers' opportunity to defend their supplementary estimates, which are in the billions, and to defend the main estimates, which are in the tens and tens of billions. This is not to address day-to-day procurement but to actually defend their request for Parliament to approve the billions of dollars, which is the whole reason that this committee exists and, frankly, going back to 1295 and the Model Parliament, the reason that our Parliament exists.

Mr. Jowhari, go ahead, sir.

• (1325)

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On that note, I believe a combined session of one and a half hours takes many aspects or many concerns into account.

First of all, each one of them made themselves available for an extra 30 minutes. If we look at the totality of it, we are looking at each one of them coming in for one hour for the main estimates as well as the supplementary estimates (C). We are really saying to use the efficiency factor. With respect to that extra 30 minutes that we are discussing, a 25-minute rotation has two spots for the Liberals, two spots for the CPC and two spots of two and a half minutes and two and a half minutes.

Really, this is not as drastic as some of our colleagues are trying to make it sound. It's just making sure that we get the ministers here as soon as possible when they're available. The commitment has been made. We have moved a motion. They are making themselves available. Coordination has gone into ensuring that they are available and they're going to spend one and a half hours with us, and their officials are also going to be here for half an hour after that to be able to answer any questions we have.

I've looked at both supplementary estimates (C) and the main estimates. I read the PBO report. I've looked at where the money is going, and yes, it is in the tens of millions of dollars, but when you look at what was voted and where it has gone and so on, one and a half hours is more than ample time to be able to ask questions on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thanks.

Mr. Bains, is your hand up again to speak or is it just left from before?

Mr. Parm Bains: It's a legacy hand.

The Chair: I see no other speakers. Can we move to a vote on Mr. Genuis's amendment?

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

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, go ahead.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair. That's good news.

I want to propose one more change. Traditionally we have heard from the ministers on the supplementary estimates and the main estimates separately. I think that the efforts to bundle together the supplementary estimates, the main estimates and the departmental plans really aren't respectful of the processes the committee should follow.

I would propose that we remove the text that says, "the 2024-2025 Main Estimates, and the 2024-25 Departmental Plans". The effect of that amendment would be that the hearing on March 20 would be on the supplementary estimates, in keeping with the traditions of this committee and, I think, the reasonable expectations at all committees of accountability in relation to each set of estimates.

The Chair: Thanks.

You're proposing that we'd be striking "Main Estimates" with the intent, I assume, that the main estimates will be reviewed at a separate time, as has been done in the past.

Mr. Sousa, are you speaking on Mr. Genuis's proposal?

• (1330)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but just to clarify, it's striking "Main Estimates" and the reference to departmental plans.

Thank you.

The Chair: I have Mr. Sousa and then Ms. Vignola.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We were trying to extend some time to provide for both ministers to appear, to do what was requested and what we require, and now we're suggesting that we have multiple engagements, in essence. Am I right?

We've added on another member, Ms. O'Gorman, and now we're requesting that instead of providing some efficiencies to the work by allowing extended time for the two ministers to appear concurrently in regard to these matters, you're asking for separate engagements and now separate meetings relative to each of these and the time that we require for them.

Are you then, supposedly, reducing the time of each minister's appearance? I'm not sure that's being amended here. I'm just looking for some guidance and clarity and concurrence with other members of my team and staff. Of course, we're all virtual here, so it's even more difficult to attend to. I'm looking at how we can proceed without having further discussion in regard to some of those amendments. I'm actually quite concerned about proceeding without having the ability to have concurrence with some members of my team. I'm looking for some guidance in that regard.

I would prefer to see what we have put forward to expedite and facilitate the meeting and extend the meeting accordingly to provide for a more thorough discussion relative to these issues.

The Chair: We'll go to Mrs. Vignola. While she is chatting, I encourage you to perhaps chat with your team. We could certainly go back to the traditional way we've done it in the last eight years that I've been here, which is one full separate meeting with TBS and one full separate meeting for PSPC.

Go ahead, Mrs. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, we normally hold two separate meetings for the Treasury Board and for Public Services and Procurement Canada. Generally, ministers come for one hour and we have the officials for the other hour.

What I understood from Mr. Genuis' amendment is that we would have both ministers for two hours, which boils down to our usual process, meaning one hour with the minister, one hour with another minister, then one hour with officials. I would like confirmation that I understood correctly, please. Otherwise, we are not asking for the same thing.

Is Mr. Genuis asking for us to have both ministers for two hours each and to do so twice, or even three times, to talk about the departmental plans that just got thrown at us? I voted for us to dedicate two hours to study both plans, taking into account that it is usually one hour per plan.

[English]

The Chair: As it is, the amendment is amending the original motion, which is for the ministers together for an hour and a half, with the officials there for two hours, in one meeting. The amendment is to change it to the estimates only. The amendment is not to go back to our normal process, which is one minister for an hour and the officials for the full two hours, and then, for the second meeting, the stand-alone minister for an hour.

This is just amending what's in front of us, which is an hour and a half with the ministers side by side. We would require to perhaps defeat all of this and then try to re-book a minister and a minister, in separate meetings, to go back to what we've traditionally done here in the past.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I would like Mr. Genuis' amendment in writing, please, so that everything is very clear for me and my team.

[English]

The Chair: I don't think Mr. Genuis has the amended motion in writing. How about we just have the clerk read back the amended motion as Mr. Genuis proposes? It's basically just taking out main estimates and departmental plans, with the intent, I'm going to assume, to do the main estimates at a separate time, as we have done in the past. That makes sense.

I'm going to have the clerk read it.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: So, do we need to table a new motion for the main estimates, another for the plans and a third for the budget on April 16th?

[English]

The Chair: We traditionally have not needed a motion to have the minister show up for the main estimates or for the departmental plans. We have just booked them, because the ministers have always agreed. It's part of every minister's role to attend their committee, defend their estimates and justify why they're asking for x amount of dollars. I will assume that we won't need a separate motion to have them come to do the main estimates, as they should be doing. We've never in the past had a separate motion to have them show up to do the supplementary estimates either. We book them; it's their role to defend.

I can have the clerk read back for you where we are right now, though. It's a very short one, actually.

Then I have Mr. Genuis and Mr. May.

Go ahead, sir.

The Clerk: To date, we have amended the original motion by Mr. Sousa with the amendment proposed by Madame Vignola. It was subsequently amended as well by the amendment put forward by Mr. Genuis.

Now we are on a second amendment by Mr. Genuis. This is the text I have, based on the second amendment that's currently being

debated by the committee: "That the Committee invites the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada and the President of Canada Border Services Agency, Erin O'Gorman, to each appear separately for one hour and a half each, as well as officials, regarding the 2023-2024 Supplementary Estimates (C), and that the meeting take place on Wednesday, March 20, 2024."

Again, the current amendment would remove the main estimates 2024-25 and the departmental plans. This is the amendment proposed by Mr. Genuis that is currently being debated by the committee.

The Chair: I have Mr. Genuis next. Then we have Mr. May and Mr. Bains.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

Briefly, Mr. Sousa said we need a bit more time and discussion on this. I mean, Mr. Sousa's the one who moved his motion in the middle of witness testimony. I'm working with the text of a motion that he put forward. That's why we're in this situation.

The chair has in the past—and quite rightly, I think—asked ministers to appear before the committee on those different aspects of their responsibility. The intent of this motion seems to be to do something irregular—that is, to bundle together ministers and accountability events. Normally, we hear from a minister on the supplementary estimates, a minister on the main estimates, another minister on the supplementary estimates and another minister on the main estimates. He wants to have all the appearances of all the ministers on the supplementaries and mains and departmental plans to happen all at once. This is an attempt by Mr. Sousa and his government to limit accountability and to limit the need for ministers to respond to questions. That's quite obvious.

Given that he has, in the middle of witness testimony, put forward this motion aimed at limiting accountability, we are seeking amendments to go back, within the parameters of ministers' schedules, as we understand them, to the normal thing.

To the question about the effect of this second amendment—I think this is the last amendment, and we'd be happy to see the motion pass with this amendment—this would be the supplementary estimates. The main estimates can be dealt with in the normal fashion.

That's really all that needs to be said.

The Chair: I have Mr. May and then Mr. Bains.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Originally, my hand went up to ask a question that my Bloc colleague got a clear answer to, because it was getting a bit confusing in terms of what we were amending and how we were amending it.

With regard to Mr. Genuis's comments, I find it amusing that we moved a motion to bring the ministers to be accountable for their ministries and now he's accusing us of somehow protecting the ministers from that accountability.

I'm a guest here—I'm covering for my honourable colleague Irek Kusmierczyk—so I regret that I don't have a clear line of sight of the norm of this committee. However, I can speak to the traditions of other committees.

As the former chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, I was very honoured to take on that role for four years. Quite often we would have ministers appear together just out of pure necessity. We have limited time in the calendar to have ministers appear before committee before the estimates are through the process. This question should be asked: Do we want to have the ministers here to actually speak to these measures after the fact, after they've been processed? Of course we don't. We want to be able to speak to them before the process is wrapped up.

I understand the comment from my colleague Mr Genuis and where it's coming from, but to be blunt, I think we have very limited time to go through these measures. Bringing them together is not always the easiest thing to do, and we also don't know that it is possible to have them appear together, so we'll have to wait to get responses back from the ministers and their schedulers, but I think the motion from my colleague Mr. Sousa is more than reasonable and I think we're getting very far from the actual motion that was tabled. It's become something completely different.

With regard to that, I will vote no on this amendment.

Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair.

• (1340)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. May.

I will point out that we have until May 31 before the main estimates are deemed reported, so we do have a fair amount of time still.

Go ahead, Mr. Bains. Then we have Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if I can get the motion, as it is now, in writing, please. I know the clerk read it out, but it's tough to follow. Can we get that in writing and emailed to all of us?

The Chair: The clerk will send that out.

Mr. Sousa is next.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are trying to provide the ministers' availability.

While I have not been on any of these committees prior to the year I arrived, it is my understanding that the invitations to the ministers are made via a motion. They're not unilaterally made, to my understanding, by the chair, so we're trying to take that process in hand and we're trying to make the ministers available accordingly. We're also trying to extend the time of the joint engagement of both ministers to expedite the matter and to facilitate the issues that are being looked upon.

I won't be supporting the motion from Mr. Genuis, because we're trying to facilitate and get the individuals before this committee to do what is necessary on our behalf.

I look forward to reading it once it comes forward. I look forward to seeing exactly what is being suggested or proposed. I'm also trying to make certain that we have the ministers available for our purposes, and that's why we've extended the time to have them appear jointly.

That's it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thanks.

I'm going to suspend for two minutes so that everyone can get the written copy and we can move forward.

• (1340)

(Pause)

• (1345)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Everyone, we are back. The clerk has sent out the motion as it's been amended and agreed upon. Written into what he has sent out is the inclusion of Mr. Genuis' amendments.

Mr. Sousa, your hand's still up. Are you still speaking on this, or can we go to a vote?

Mr. Charles Sousa: No. I need to review this, Chair. We're just reading it now. We just got it, so we're taking some time, if we can just have a moment, and we'll—

The Chair: I will do 60 seconds maximum. There aren't a lot of changes, so we should get to it, please.

Mr. Bachrach, do you wish to speak on it while it's being reviewed, and then we'll get back to Mr. Sousa?

• (1350)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, my only comment is that some of the sentence structure reads a bit funny, particularly with regard to the reference to officials, which is sort of added in at the end. The word “each” appears twice: “to each appear separately for one hour and a half each”.

I don't want to outstay my welcome by wordsmithing. I'm hopeful.

The Chair: It is written as it was adopted. I understand what you're saying, and we'll make sure we're clear on the intent of it.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'm just hoping that the intent comes across. I'm unclear, reading it, how the order fits into this.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Genuis. You have a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. I've been trying for a minute. I had a technical issue.

Chair, the version that was distributed was not what I said in my amendment. I said “to each appear separately”. I think I was quite clear on that. I said put the word “each” before “appear” and then “separately” after the word “appear”. I think that will address Mr. Bachrach's issue as well.

The Chair: That's what we received from your staff, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. What?

The Chair: That is what the clerk received from your staff.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I didn't provide written notice of it. I said "to each appear separately". That is what I said on the record when I moved it.

The Chair: That is what your staff apparently provided to the clerk, and the clerk made the adjustments. Can you perhaps go back to your staff?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I moved an amendment verbally. I was clear about what I said, and the transcript will make that clear. No text was submitted.

The Chair: The clerk did not just pull it out of the air, Mr. Genuis. Unless he's mistaken, he informed me that the text that was sent out came from your staff. I understand what you're saying, but perhaps you need to confirm with your staff what was sent over to the clerk.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Perhaps my staff made an error, and I apologize if the staff sent something after the fact to the clerk by email in error, but I moved an amendment verbally, and that should be reflected.

Thank you.

The Chair: Why don't we move to Mr. Sousa?

Why don't you draft something to ensure that the clerk has the right version, and then we can resend it back out?

Mr. Anthony, I see you're back. We're going to be a short while longer, I'm assuming, so you're welcome to disengage again, Mr. Anthony.

Mr. Sousa, did you wish to...?

Why don't we wait a few minutes? We'll get the correct version and redistribute it. We will suspend again for five minutes.

• (1350) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1355)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We are with Mr. Sousa. Go ahead.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've been trying to read the amendment through now, as received. Once this is initiated, will we go back to the original? How does this play out? Will this be the final version, or is there an opportunity for us to revise it?

The Chair: We're on Mr. Genuis's amendment. Why don't I just have the clerk read it back in for the record, because there's been a lot of back-and-forth?

We're on Mr. Genuis's amendment. That's what we're debating and trying to move forward on.

We'll have the clerk read it back into the record and we will move forward if there is anyone else on the speaking list. Hopefully, we can vote on it.

The Clerk: The motion as it stands reads as follows:

That the committee invites the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada and the President of the Canada Border Services Agency, Erin O'Gorman, to each appear separately for one and a half hours—

We'll remove the word "each" that is redundant. That can be removed.

—as well as officials, regarding the 2023-24 supplementary estimates (C), and that the meeting take place on Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

The Chair: Perfect.

I don't see anyone else on the speaking list. Can we—

Go ahead, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes, it's right on precedent. We're trying to combine them to provide for that and to provide the extra extended time, but now, the way the amendment reads, what we're doing is providing not only the ministers; now we've included officials and others to appear for a longer period of time.

The initial intent was to enable us to expedite and facilitate the meeting. What we're doing is extending ministers' times. We're extending the time and now including outside officials who normally would not be part of it. I think that's the part we're having difficulty with as we go forward.

What happens next, Mr. Chair? Is it possible to make amendments at this point?

The Chair: We're debating the amendment, so we'd have to move forward on that.

Are you suggesting that perhaps we—I'm going to stick my nose in here—go back to the traditional one hour for the supplementary estimates with the minister and then the second hour with the officials?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm suggesting that we just combine them and extend the time so we can expedite it. I prefer—

The Chair: Do you mean extend the time as in a three-hour meeting, Mr. Sousa?

I'm sorry; I'm just trying to work it out so we can move forward. Are you suggesting a three-hour meeting?

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is.... As a consequence of what's being amended now, extension of time is now throughout this, with the inclusion of others. What happens after this amendment? If it gets voted down, what happens then? If it passes—

The Chair: If this amendment gets voted down, then we're back to the original amended motion, which was yours, with Mrs. Vignola's amendment.

Mr. Charles Sousa: If it passes, it passes and that's that?

The Chair: If what passes? Do you mean the amendment?

Mr. Charles Sousa: We're going to be requesting—

The Chair: Are you talking about if Mr. Genuis's amendment passes?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Correct.

The Chair: If it passes, then we go back. That becomes the amended motion, and we vote on the amended motion.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Then can we make amendments to that motion at that point?

Again, my concern is that we're actually now extending the time extensively for the ministers and for others from outside. It's unconventional to have outside members.

• (1400)

The Chair: Just to be clear, we cannot re-amend the subamendment. For example, we can't go back and have an amendment to remove Ms. O'Gorman. We cannot change that once it has been accepted.

If Mr. Genuis's amendment is accepted as is, we can't go back and change those specific things that Mr. Genuis put in, nor can we change the specific things that Mrs. Vignola put in.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Right, and our initial engagement was to engage more. Actually, part of the friendly amendment by Mrs. Vignola was to accommodate some of those requests. If this proceeds and it passes, then we cannot go back. This is it. We don't have another opportunity to amend.

The Chair: You can amend, but you wouldn't be able to take away, for example, Mrs. Vignola's amendment, which we accepted, of having Ms. O'Gorman here.

If, for example, we did pass it, though, and the ministers are available for only one hour and then perhaps one of them says, "Well, I can only do one hour on a separate day", and happenstance happens to be what we've normally done for the supplementary estimates, such is life, if you get what I'm saying.

If we pass this amendment, then it includes the CBSA. We cannot change that, nor can we change the items that Mr. Genuis has changed. You could propose something else, such as adding another department or adding more time to a meeting, but you can't change what we've agreed upon.

I see that Mrs. Vignola's hand is up. Go ahead, Mrs. Vignola.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Chair, this is probably a disconcertingly naïve question, but would it be appropriate for the movers to willingly withdraw the amendment and the main motion so that the committee can proceed as usual? Is that an option? Is it possible to get a consensus on that, or are we caught in a bind?

[English]

The Chair: We can, with unanimous consent. For example, if Mr. Sousa wishes to withdraw this motion entirely and leave it to the chair to book one hour with one minister and a second hour with the second minister and the minister's officials for the supplementary estimates, as we've done in the past, we could do it on UC.

I see no one else on the speaking list, so we'll go to the vote, Mr. Clerk, on Mr. Genuis's amendment.

The vote is tied at five-five. I vote yes as well.

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

The Chair: We're now back to Mr. Sousa's motion as amended, as Mr. Genuis's amendment and Madame Vignola's amendment have been accepted.

Go ahead, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Chair, I don't know if I can now amend my own motion and reduce it to 60 minutes.

The Chair: No.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Colleagues...?

I'll defer to the vice-chair.

The Chair: Are you giving up the floor to someone else, Mr. Sousa?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm giving up the floor to the vice-chair.

• (1405)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move an amendment to the motion that will limit the appearance of the ministers to one hour only.

The Chair: Are you suggesting one hour side by side, or one hour and then one hour?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: At this point, it looks like it will be one hour and one hour. We had offered one and a half hours side by side, but it was not accepted, unless I'm not following this properly.

The Chair: Mr. May, are you speaking on Mr. Jowhari's amendment, which is simply to change it from 90 minutes to 60 minutes?

Mr. Bryan May: I actually have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I didn't want to interrupt my colleague.

The Chair: You should feel free to.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Bryan May: You had suggested that my colleague, Mr. Sousa, could not amend his own motion, but his motion was amended. I just want to get clarity from the clerk that Mr. Sousa has the privilege to move an amendment at this point.

I stand to be corrected on that, but I would very much like to know if that's the case.

The Chair: I can pass it over to the clerk or I can just tell you that this is the case. It's because it's in his name.

Mr. Bryan May: Even though the motion was—

The Chair: It's in his name. That's the issue.

Mr. Bryan May: I understand, but his motion was amended a couple of times.

The Chair: It's still his motion—

Mr. Bryan May: Excuse me. His motion was amended a couple of times. He doesn't have the right to then move an amendment on that motion. Is that correct?

The Chair: Well, you won't listen to me, so I'll hand it over to the clerk to tell you the same thing.

The Clerk: That is my understanding, sir. If you'd like me to double-check that on your behalf, I can. At this point, we do have an amendment put forward by Mr. Jowhari, but to clear the record, I don't mind going back and checking that for you, sir, if you'd like.

Mr. Bryan May: I would appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: It's somewhat beside the point, because we have Mr. Jowhari actually putting through the amendment that, I assume, Mr. Sousa wanted.

Is anyone else on the speaking list on Mr. Jowhari's amendment to change it to one hour, with the assumption being not side by side, but one hour and one hour?

We can move to a vote on Mr. Jowhari's amendment. We'll do a recorded vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We can now vote on the amended motion from Mr. Sousa. We'll go to a recorded vote.

I'll give you a 30-second warning, Mr. Anthony. We will get back to you very shortly, if you want to come back online.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Leave it with me and the clerk and I think Mr. Jowhari, as vice-chair, to figure out who will be here at what time, if that's fine with everyone. Thanks very much.

Mr. Anthony, I apologize for the delay. Thank you.

We are now back with Mr. Berthold for five minutes. Go ahead, sir.

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, you and your partner, Mr. Firth, seem to have found the perfect recipe for getting rich on the backs of Canadians, without technical knowledge, without staff. It seems that the Trudeau government's laxity left the door to the safe wide open.

Since 2015, did anyone within the Liberal government look into your business model?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's not really surprising.

According to the numbers available—because even the Auditor General can't confirm the invoices due to the lack of details and due to the fact that your partner, Mr. Firth, is calling everyone talking about it a liar—you and your numbered company made between \$4 million and \$8 million in profits from federal contracts since 2015. Is that correct?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not sure what you're referencing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: How much money did you get through federal contracts since 2015? I'm talking about you and your numbered company.

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have that information with me right now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Anthony, if I were a regular Canadian and millions of dollars were deposited into my account, I would be able to tell you if it was two, four or eight million dollars, for example. For you, that seems to be chump change, but for the majority of Canadians lining up at food banks, it is a lot of money.

According to the estimates, your personal profit was somewhere between four and eight million dollars. Is that right?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Again, I don't have those numbers in front of me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Anthony, am I to understand that you can't say if you earned more than \$4 million through federal contracts since 2015?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Was it more than \$5 million?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Was it more than \$6 million?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Was it more than \$7 million?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have those numbers in front of me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Was it more than \$8 million?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have any numbers in front of me.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: So, you can't even tell us how many millions of dollars you've gotten since you've owned your company, money that came from Canadian taxpayers.

You were too greedy, and I think your business model makes it abundantly clear. You found a formula and you decided to overstep, so much so the Auditor General talked about it in the report you said you did not take the time to read. You should be ashamed for not giving answers to Canadians.

Are you ashamed that you cannot say how much money you took from Canadian taxpayers with your business model, which intended to collect money without doing any work, without having any technical knowledge?

[English]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have nothing further to say to this witness.

• (1415)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Next, I have someone from the Liberals, but I don't have the speaking order. I'm sorry. Who's up next?

Mr. Bains, do you have a point of order, sir?

Mr. Parm Bains: It's my turn, I believe.

The Chair: You're going to go. Perfect. Thanks very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Bains.

Mr. Parm Bains: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to try to add some clarity to what I feel we've learned over the last little while here.

I asked Mr. Firth yesterday about this process of how the industry operates and how contracts are procured. You talked about working in 2005. He indicated that his earliest work with the government was in 2007. He said that the process has not changed since then, which surprised me, after hearing Mr. Berthold's question about whether anybody asked.

Do you also feel that the process has not changed since your time in 2005 until now?

Mr. Darren Anthony: The process, I believe, has been in place since 2003.

Mr. Parm Bains: It started in 2003, before you even got there. You're ultimately playing within the rules that were set, and they have not changed since 2003.

Mr. Darren Anthony: They would have changed a small bit with regard to the number of vendors in certain.... Let's say it's a tier 1 RFP. At one point, there used to be five vendors invited; now it's a minimum of 15.

Mr. Parm Bains: That could simply be because the scope of the work has increased, etc., and there's more work required at this time. Is that safe to say?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. It could be for a number of reasons.

Mr. Parm Bains: With you being a security officer, I'm just going to go through the steps. There's a security requirements checklist, and then there's document safeguarding and there's facility security. All of those steps are then signed off by whom?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Well, if you have those requirements, you—

Mr. Parm Bains: Once you've submitted them, who signs those off?

Mr. Darren Anthony: It's PSPC.

Mr. Parm Bains: It's a public official. It's somebody in the bureaucracy.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Parm Bains: How many people sign those off?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I think there's a team of people there. I have numerous names—

Mr. Parm Bains: Do you know the rules around that? Is it supposed to be four?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no idea.

Mr. Parm Bains: Let's say somebody signs off on what you've submitted over the portal, or wherever. Somebody has to sign those off, and it's public officials. Do you get a response from somebody?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I do.

Mr. Parm Bains: Who is that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have the name in front of me. I'm happy to go through my emails and send you the—

Mr. Parm Bains: Yes. Please submit which public officials sign off on what you submit.

Ultimately, what I've seen is that there are a lot of relationships here. You know the folks at Coradix. You know the folks at Dalian. You know others. You're a recruiter. You said you're a recruiter. Everyone out there seems to be sort of sharing their subcontractors, who probably work across other companies. Is that true?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, that's true. Subcontractors are free to work with whomever they want.

Mr. Parm Bains: Okay.

Now you have public officials signing off. There's a whole industry of people like you. You have all these subcontractors who probably, over time, become known. Everybody knows who's who. This brings me back to how everybody knows the system. It's been the same since 2003. It has not changed.

In a way, would it be accurate to say that everybody's colluding together to do this, whether it's what the price limits are and all of those things? Does everybody have the same pricing—

Mr. Darren Anthony: No—

Mr. Parm Bains: —and there's so much work to go around that it doesn't matter, and everybody can pick and choose? Whoever's not working on something, it's, “Hey, why don't you go here?”

Is everybody talking to one another, yes or no?

• (1420)

The Chair: That's your time, Mr. Bains.

Are you able to offer a quick answer?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks very much.

I have Ms. Vignola, please, for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, I want to come back to the procedural aspect and oversight. Was the work done by GC Strategies, specifically when it comes to ArriveCAN, overseen, validated and verified by the contracting authority, meaning the Canada Border Services Agency?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have that information.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: As for you personally, within the framework of the ArriveCAN contracts, did anyone at all from the Canada Border Services Agency supervise you or ask you questions?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no information on that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Are you telling me that you do not know if you received any questions about your work on ArriveCAN?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: No one has asked me.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Ah, I see, thank you. So, no one questioned you.

I am asking these questions to understand how GC Strategies and the numbered companies you own operate. In particular, I am trying to understand how one loses control over the management of public funds, which come from taxes paid by the public, and to know where those taxes go.

Part of the money received by GC Strategies was distributed to subcontractors, and another part went into your pockets. I will let you talk about the money that went into your pockets: Is it still in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: I'm not sure what you're referring to when you ask which one I have pocketed.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Are the profits still in Canada, or were they sent elsewhere, to companies or trusts abroad? Is that money still in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Anthony: Everything is still in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bachrach, you have two and a half minutes, please, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, how did you respond to the news that the government had banned your company from all government contracts?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I was very upset.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: What steps did you take after receiving that news?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We've taken no steps so far.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Did you meet with your business partner to discuss the suspension of government contracts?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I made him aware that we were no longer able to do business with the federal government.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: This news was communicated to you, and then you communicated it to Mr. Firth.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I received the email.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That was prior to having your security status suspended.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. The notification came in on February 14. I believe our security was suspended on March 1.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: After having your contract suspended, did you meet with Mr. Firth to determine the best course of action for your company?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We discussed what our steps would be going forward, but we didn't really get into detail, as we have been focusing on these committee meetings.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Did you communicate with the government after learning that your contracts had been suspended?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I communicated with the departments that had reached out to me to send us documents to sign off on contracts that were existing to let our resources know that they were no longer able to work.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: What was the substance of those conversations with the departments with which you communicated?

• (1425)

Mr. Darren Anthony: They would say that they would sign an amendment to a contract, that the contract was on hold or terminated.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Did you or Mr. Firth appeal in any way this decision by the government to suspend all your contracts? Both you and Mr. Firth have asserted to the committee that you've done nothing wrong, and all of a sudden the government takes away all of your business. Did you appeal that decision?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Not yet.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Do you intend to?

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead and answer, Mr. Anthony.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Maybe.

The Chair: Thanks.

Now we have Mr. Sousa for five minutes, please.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anthony, do you know, or have you ever met, Mr. MacDonald or Mr. Utano?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I have not.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You've never spoken to them.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Nope.

Mr. Charles Sousa: They never participated in any meetings.

Do you know the principals of Botler? Did you ever meet with them?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I have never met with them. The only interaction I've had with Botler has been for security.

Mr. Charles Sousa: What did you do with regard to providing security clearance? What did you do in that case with those two individuals?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Those two individuals reached out to me, asking how to get security-cleared with the federal government. I gave them the instructions that they needed to get fingerprinted. I found a place in Montreal—that's where they were residing at the time—that does federal fingerprinting. I got them through that process. They sent me back their documents with the DCNs, the document control numbers, on them. They sent me their dates of birth and their citizenships. I submitted that through the OLISS portal, and they were able to get security-cleared.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You facilitated their engagement. They didn't have a contract. Is that correct? Why did they need security clearance? What exactly was taking place?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Who instructed you to provide the requirements for fingerprinting and security engagement? How did that come to be?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I believe they reached out to me to say that they needed security clearance.

Mr. Charles Sousa: The two principals reached out to you. This would have been Amir Morv and Ritika Dutt.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: They reached out to you.

Mr. Darren Anthony: I believe so, yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Their request was that they needed clearance in order to engage with the federal government.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: They didn't have a contract.

Mr. Darren Anthony: At that time, without a contract, you were able to do that to start the process.

If you were submitting a bid on an RFP that you were not awarded, there could be a number or an identifier associated with that, but prior to a few years ago, you would be able to submit a name for security clearance and say that they were just a consultant, and they would be able to get a clearance.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Had Mr. Firth been in contact with them as well, concurrent with you, in terms of their engagement?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have any knowledge of his contact with Botler.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Okay. Botler contacted you for their security, and no contract was evident. They were going through a preliminary study or pilot or whatever it was called. That's why they needed this clearance, which you helped them to get.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes, I would assume so.

Mr. Charles Sousa: You, being an owner of GC Strategies—a major owner, a 50% owner—didn't have a contract with the government regarding their engagement either. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That's correct.

Mr. Charles Sousa: GC Strategies doesn't have a contract. Botler doesn't have a contract. You're facilitating security clearance for them to potentially get a contract.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Charles Sousa: There was no RFP. There was no request for contracts, because there was nothing being proposed at that point.

Mr. Darren Anthony: There was no RFP, no.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Are you aware that there are accusations against GC Strategies relative to their conduct in how they operated?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

• (1430)

Mr. Charles Sousa: They've disputed that GC Strategies misrepresented them in regard to their résumés or their qualifications when they dealt with Dalian, I believe, and they ultimately got the contract. Are you aware of that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I'm not aware of that.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Are you aware of Dalian's engagement in subcontracting, or did Dalian subcontract GC Strategies?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Did Dalian provide funds to GC Strategies?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Do you know if Botler got paid for their services through GC Strategies or through Dalian?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sousa.

Colleagues, I apologize. I skipped over the Conservative round. I was so anxious to hear from Mr. Sousa.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charles Sousa: You caught me off guard too.

The Chair: I'm sorry.

We'll go to Mr. Brock. Then it will be Mr. Genuis, Mr. Jowhari and the Bloc and the NDP.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Anthony, do you currently have, or have you had in the past, any relatives working with the Government of Canada?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Larry Brock: All right.

I'm going to ask you a number of rapid-fire questions.

First, you'd agree with me, sir, that Kristian Firth really is the sole public face of government of Canada strategies.

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Charles Sousa: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I don't believe it's called "government of Canada strategies". GC Strategies is the name of the company. We've already resolved that.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Mr. Sousa, but thanks.

Mr. Brock, continue, sir.

Mr. Larry Brock: Are you a public face?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I might be now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Larry Brock: You probably are, yes—that's a good observation—but you'd agree with me that Mr. Firth was front and centre during the rollout of the arrive scam app over the last several years. It wasn't you; it was Mr. Firth. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: He was the face for ArriveCAN, yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Yes. He was the one who held all the relationships with the bureaucrats and government officials, such as deputy ministers and ministers. It was not you. Is that correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I don't have any knowledge of that.

Mr. Larry Brock: He was the one who was wining and dining potential contractors with government officials. That wasn't you, correct?

Mr. Darren Anthony: That wasn't me.

Mr. Larry Brock: No. Literally everything to do with the ArriveCAN scam was flowed directly through Kristian Firth. It had none of your DNA on it. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I was not involved.

Mr. Larry Brock: Right.

We heard yesterday from Kristian Firth—not only yesterday, but in previous testimony—that he's quite proud of the ArriveCAN scam. Are you equally proud?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes. I'm proud of the work that we were able to deliver.

Mr. Larry Brock: Are you proud of the end result?

Mr. Darren Anthony: Which end result are you referring to?

Mr. Larry Brock: The end result that resulted in extremely long delays at the borders, chaos and confusion at airports, the faulty glitchy part of the app that resulted in the illegal detention of 10,000 Canadians. Are you proud of those facts, Mr. Anthony, yes or no?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Larry Brock: Come on, Mr. Anthony. You read papers. You watch the news. Were you living under a rock for the last three years? Did you not experience the frustrations that millions of Canadians had at airports and border crossings? You want this committee to believe this lie that you have no knowledge of those basic facts? Come on. No one believes you. I certainly don't believe you.

Do you think Canadians got value for their money for the ArriveCAN scam?

Mr. Darren Anthony: We were asked to do a job for a price and we did it.

Mr. Larry Brock: It was a price that was originally estimated at \$80,000 and that multiplied 750 times to around \$60 million. Is that, sir, value for the money?

• (1435)

Mr. Darren Anthony: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Larry Brock: Of course you don't.

You were completely unable to answer relevant questions from numerous members of this committee. Will you ultimately answer questions that are put to you by the RCMP?

Mr. Darren Anthony: If the RCMP reaches out, I will co-operate with them.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you.

Those are my questions, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Mr. Genuis, please, for five minutes, and then to Mr. Jowhari, Mrs. Vignola and Mr. Bachrach.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Anthony, Botler executives have testified that Kristian Firth, your partner, bragged about having “dirt” on his friends who were senior government contracting officials. Has Mr. Firth ever told you that he has dirt on anyone?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Does Mr. Firth have any dirt on you?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You're nonetheless prepared to continue to defend him in spite of everything you've heard today.

Mr. Darren Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Do you intend to read the Auditor General's report after the meeting is over?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Why not?

Mr. Darren Anthony: The damage has already been done for me. It does not affect me.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sir, you began your opening statement by talking about how much it affects you. We've been over this ground before.

Mr. Anthony, one of my colleagues had been asking you about meetings with Mr. Firth. Did you discuss your testimony today with Mr. Firth?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Did he participate in any of your preparatory activities?

Mr. Darren Anthony: No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

You did say—and the record will show—that in response to questions from Mr. Bachrach, you said you were.... In terms of time spent on responding to the suspension, you said you hadn't discussed it because you were focused “on these committee meetings”. Did you not say that?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I did say that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. You've just admitted to me that in your discussions with Mr. Firth, you were focused “on these committee meetings”. At the same time, 30 seconds previously—

Mr. Darren Anthony: No. That's not what I meant when I said that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Well, what did you mean?

Mr. Darren Anthony: I had no discussions with Mr. Firth about this committee meeting.

When Mr. Bachrach—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: But you were nonetheless focused on the committee meetings in your discussions with him.

Mr. Darren Anthony: No, I did not say that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sir, I think the record will show that you said many things that you didn't say, and I hope you do actually read the Auditor General's report, which you no doubt have already read.

Mr. Chair, in light of the previous discussions about security and privacy issues raised by Mr. Anthony's testimony, I'd now like to move a motion.

The motion is:

That the Chair report to the House that in light of the evidence of Darren Anthony, Chief Security Officer for GC Strategies, that he did not vet or review ArriveCAN subcontracts awarded by GC Strategies, and given that the Auditor General found “some resources that were involved in the security assessments were not identified in the task authorizations and did not have security clearance” as submitted by GC Strategies, and that the Canada Border Services Agency “was unable to provide any supporting documentation to confirm that work related to the security assessments were performed by 4 of the 5 resources listed”, the Committee calls upon the Privacy Commissioner to conduct an investigation of the ArriveCAN app, including the work of all contractors and sub-contractors, and determine whether the privacy and personal information of Canadians was adequately protected, with a view to presenting a special report to Parliament.

That motion has been sent, and I believe it has been distributed. I think it's fairly self-explanatory, Chair.

The testimony today raises—

The Chair: Let me interrupt you quickly. You're saying It has been sent to everyone's P9s in both languages.

Go ahead, then, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I think it's clear from the testimony today that the person responsible for security at GC Strategies was not attending to and is not able to answer questions about key measures that should have been in place to protect the privacy and security of Canadians. Therefore, I believe this motion will and should receive the quick support of this committee, and we can ask the Privacy Commissioner to undertake this important work.

There have been a number of different investigations in relation to the ArriveCAN app, of course, but this is a unique element: the implications for the privacy and security of Canadians' data. Many Canadians put their personal data into this app, expecting that it would be protected, and I think we now need to ask the Privacy Commissioner to investigate the serious problems we've heard about today.

• (1440)

The Chair: Thank you.

I assume everyone has received the motion.

I have Mr. Sousa and then Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Chair, I'd ask for a 10-minute suspension to review this, please.

The Chair: Mr. Jowhari, was that the same issue for you, or did you wish to speak on this?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. Are you talking to me?

The Chair: Yes. Your hand is up.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes.

The Chair: Was it on the same issue, to ask for a short suspension?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes. I ask for a 10-minute suspension.

The Chair: Why don't we do five minutes? We'll come back at a quarter to three.

We're suspended for five minutes.

• (1440) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1445)

The Chair: Colleagues, can you come back in, please? We are returning.

Thank you.

Are we ready to move ahead on this, Mr. Jowhari?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Chair, in the interest of time and given the fact that we've now asked the witness to wait a couple of times, can we proceed with the next round of questions—i.e., the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP—and then dismiss Mr. Anthony and then go back to this motion? Otherwise, we are going to run out of time and lose our support, our translation.

• (1450)

The Chair: Well, you can put forward a motion to adjourn debate on the motion. Otherwise—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, on a point of order, what's the timeline in terms of resources?

The Chair: It's to about three o'clock, and then we lose our interpreters. Also, we may end up losing Mr. Anthony at three o'clock, although that's certainly not our intention.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Are we able to resume with further interpretation?

The Chair: Give me one moment, please.

It probably would require a break of about 10 to 15 minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. We could resume.

My suggestion is that the simplest thing is that we adopt this motion quickly and then get back to the testimony. That would be what I suggest.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Chair, we are not ready to adopt this motion.

The logic of asking for an investigation is based on Mr. Anthony's not reading an AG report, etc.

Chair, it's fair for us to be able to—

The Chair: Mr. Jowhari, I'm sorry. Let me interrupt. I see where this is going.

I'm going to suggest that if it's fine with everyone, we release Mr. Anthony. He's been with us an hour past what was expected, and we're going to lose interpreters anyway, so if everyone's fine, I'm going to release Mr. Anthony.

An hon. member: Yes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I still have a round of questions for Mr. Anthony, sir.

The Chair: Okay. Well, continue, and we'll see where we sit in 10 minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Jowhari, on Mr. Genuis's motion.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes. I think for us it leaves room for interpretation, and we just want to take the time to be able to look at the underlying reason and what the implication is. We can suspend this motion and come back to finish the testimony from Mr. Anthony and we can come back to the motion on Monday.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks.

Actually, I've found out that it's going to be a 30-minute wait for the pause to bring in the new interpreter team.

Mr. Sousa, go ahead.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I think we will have some amendments to the motion. I agree: Let's allow ongoing questions with the witness and then return to this motion later today or on Monday.

The Chair: Thanks.

I understand what you're saying, but we do require dilatory motions, such as moving to the next order of business or adjourning debate on this motion or having UC to do so.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes. I move a motion to adjourn debate.

The Chair: Thanks. We will go to a vote on that, sir.

The Clerk: The question is to adjourn debate on the motion of Mr. Genuis.

The Chair: It's five votes to five. I vote no.

(Motion negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: We will continue with the debate. I see no one on the speaking list. Can we move to a vote?

Go ahead, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I don't know if it's appropriate or allowed to call upon or demand that the Privacy Commissioner conduct the investigation. I believe that's... They're independent. We would certainly have to request that they do so, and I would like the opportunity to...

That's why I was asking for the adjournment of debate. We want to amend the motion in order to make it more palatable and equitable in terms of how we proceed on this issue.

I'm waiting for that amendment to come my way, with regard to supporting the motion with proper wording for how we proceed, because I don't believe you can actually call upon them or force them to do something to this effect.

• (1455)

The Chair: Is there anyone else on the speaking list?

Mr. Sousa, if you're going to speak, speak.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes. Let me, if I may, move a change to the amendment. Here's a subamendment, if I can move it. Can I read it?

The Chair: Do you have it in writing to share as well?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'll get the team to proceed to do that, but I'll read it.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm trying to respect the commissioner's ability to judge the merits of the issues independently, outside of our committee. We don't want to make this an order, per se. We recognize their independence and their arm's-length nature.

I would like to add an amendment to say, "and that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response in regard to this, and that we request the Privacy Commissioner to conduct the investigation."

I'll get it out to you in writing.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Genuis—

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm sending it to you now.

The Chair: —on the amendment.

It sounds like you're changing it to "request" instead of "calls upon", and you're adding a response from the government. Otherwise, it's staying the same, if I understand that correctly.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Correct.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, go ahead on the amendment.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Briefly, the government response piece is obviously ridiculous. I don't think it even needs to be dignified with a response.

The changing of "calls upon" to "request" seems like a distinction without a difference.

If it helps us move along, I would see if there's the unanimous consent of the committee to adopt the one part, but not the other part, of Mr. Sousa's motion, and adopt the motion.

The Chair: Do we have UC for that?

Go ahead, Mr. Sousa.

I see the NDP saying yes. I see Mr. Jowhari shaking his head.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm sorry. I was on mute.

I put forward amendments to the motion, as I read them. That's where we stand at this point.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'll move a subamendment to take out the reference to a government response.

We're asking the Privacy Commissioner to do something. Asking for a government response when we've asked the Privacy Commissioner to do something doesn't make any sense. We're asking for the feedback of the Privacy Commissioner. Again, I don't think it needs much comment.

That's the subamendment.

The Chair: Seeing no one on the speaking list, we can move to a vote on that.

Mr. Clerk—

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Chair, can you read what we're actually voting on, please?

Mr. Michael Barrett: It's a subamendment to remove the comprehensive response by the government.

The Chair: Mr. Barrett is taking over as clerk, but yes.

The Clerk: The question is to amend the motion by replacing the words "calls upon" with "requests" and to remove the request for a comprehensive response from the government pursuant to Standing Order 109. The subamendment would retain the change from "calls upon" to "requests", but would remove from the proposed amendment the text requesting a government response.

The question is on the subamendment put forward by Mr. Genuis.

• (1500)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: I vote yes to Charles Sousa, but I vote no to the subamendment. I vote yes on—

The Chair: This is on the subamendment, so it's a yes.

The Clerk: The question is on the subamendment, and your answer is yes.

Mr. Parm Bains: I'm sorry. I need to clarify. This is on Mr. Genuis's subamendment. Is that correct?

The Chair: This is a vote on the subamendment.

Mr. Parm Bains: I vote no.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Chair, it's no to Mr. Genuis's subamendment.

The Chair: You voted yes on this subamendment. The rules require unanimous consent to change your vote.

Do we have unanimous consent for Ms. Sidhu to change her vote?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: I see a no.

Continue with the vote, sir.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

There's some—

The Chair: Mr. Sousa, we're in a vote. The clerk defined it. I defined it. It's on Mr. Genuis's subamendment. I apologize if people aren't following along. However, we're in the middle of a vote, and we're going to continue with the vote. I'm sorry.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I said no to Mr. Genuis's subamendment and yes to Mr. Sousa's amendment. If you listen to it again, you will see that this is what I said.

The Chair: No. The clerk and I very clearly reiterated on the subamendment, and you said yes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Chair, that—

The Chair: We're in the middle of a vote, and unanimous consent is required to change that.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Yes, Mr. Chair. If you see, I wanted to do clarification too. I said yes to Mr. Sousa's amendment and no Mr. Genuis's subamendment. That's why I said with that—

The Chair: I specified on the subamendment, and you stated yes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: I was thinking it was Mr. Sousa's amendment. That's why I said yes.

The Chair: We clarified on the subamendment, which is Mr. Genuis's, and you stated yes.

We're going to continue with the vote.

The Clerk: We have six yeas and four nays.

The Chair: The end result wouldn't have changed anyway. It would have been a pass.

We're now on Mr. Sousa's amendment, which has been amended.

I'm sorry. We do have to suspend for our interpreters, as they are leaving right now. We have a new team coming in a bit, so I'm going to suspend. However, I am going to release Mr. Anthony.

Thank you for joining us today, sir. I appreciate your patience in sticking around. I understand that you have somewhere else to be right away, so we will release you. Thanks very much.

We are suspended. I'll update everyone in about five or 10 minutes on where we're at with our interpreters.

• (1500) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1525)

The Chair: Thanks, everyone. We are back.

I want to start by thanking... We do not have our new crew of interpreters yet, but I want to thank our current ones for agreeing to continue to stay. Thank you very much for that.

Colleagues, before we continue, I am going to seek unanimous consent—I think we generally have it—to reflect Ms. Sidhu's vote as a “no” and to the chair voting “yes” for the subamendment. Is everyone in agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

The Chair: It's the same outcome, but it reflects, I think, the intent for everyone. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

We're now on the amendment, and we're debating changing “calls upon” to “requests”.

Are we ready to move on that, or does anyone wish to speak on that part of the amendment from Mr. Sousa? Can we agree with UC on that?

(Amendment as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We're on to the motion as amended. I see thumbs up. I just want to be very clear that we're in agreement on that.

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you, sincerely, for the UC to address the vote and Ms. Sidhu showing “no” in the change of the vote. Thank you for passing that.

Unless there's anything else, we are adjourned. Our next meeting will be on Monday, with our good friend Mr. Giroux, the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

If there's nothing else, thank you, everyone, for staying late.

Thank you, of course, to our clerk, our analysts and, most importantly today, our interpreters for sticking around and allowing us to finish.

Thank you very much, everyone. We are adjourned.

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