

Spring 2019 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada

Written by: DAVID TILSON

On May 07, 2019, the Auditor General tabled his Spring 2019 Reports, which reviewed call centre performance, the processing of asylum claims, the taxation of e-commerce, oversight of government advertising, and the sufficiency of equipment and training for the RCMP. His reports confirmed a number of serious issues, which highlight Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's incompetence, poor judgement, and that he lacks a plan to fix them or the leadership required.

The Auditor General's audit of the call centres found that half of 16 million callers could not speak to an agent at Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) or for Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), or Old Age Security (OAS). Seven million callers were redirected to an automated system or to a website or were disconnected. Another million callers hung up. The situation is unlikely to improve in the near future, given that a five-year modernization project has resulted in upgrades to only eight of the government's 221 call centres. It's unacceptable that it takes, on average, 32 minutes to reach an agent at IRCC. The Prime Minister needs to outline a clear plan to address the many concerns laid out in the Auditor General's report and provide the accessible and timely service Canadians expect and deserve.

The audit of asylum claims found that Canada's refugee system has been unable to adjust to spikes in volume. Claims are not being processed within the two-month target set by the government and backlogs and wait times are worse now than when the system was reformed in 2012. It's clear that Prime Minister Trudeau has no plan to address the problems he has created at our border. This is costing Canadians over a billion dollars and counting and there is a human cost to this incompetence. We have increasing backlogs and delays that stretch across the entire immigration system, particularly for those fleeing violence and persecution. The Prime Minister has spent the last three years demonizing and personally attacking Canadians for raising these concerns. This divisive approach ignores the problems that need to be fixed. We, the Conservative Official Opposition, in stark contrast, have a plan to ensure Canada's immigration system is safe, orderly, and compassionate.

The audit of e-commerce found that the Canadian sales tax system had not kept pace with the rapidly evolving digital marketplace and that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) had not done enough work to ensure that all sales taxes are collected and remitted to the government. It's most unfortunate Prime Minister Trudeau has targeted small businesses in Canada when he should begin addressing the realities of foreign e-commerce and its tax consequences.

The audit focusing on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) found that officers did not always have access to the hard-body armour and carbines they need to protect themselves and the public. The audit also showed that a lack of planning around the addition of the carbine to the RCMP's inventory had impacted the maintenance of these semi-automatic rifles and the annual retraining of officers. This report showed that under the Trudeau government's leadership, the RCMP is not meeting the support and maintenance requirements of adding new firearms to the RCMP. Additionally, the Office of the Auditor General found that many RCMP officers lack access to the hard body armour that could save their lives in the most dangerous encounters they face. It's clear that the Liberals failed to address the problems that occurred with the roll-out of new equipment for the RCMP. We, the Official Opposition, believe that our frontline officers should have the tools they need to keep us safe. We're pleased the RCMP is working diligently to address this issue.

The audit of the mechanism the government has put in place to prevent taxpayer dollars from being used for partisan advertising found that there was little documentation to show that reviews had been conducted with sufficient rigour to address the risk of partisanship. This report clearly shows that Prime Minister Trudeau continues to use taxpayer dollars for partisan government advertising. It also states that the review process to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not spent on partisan government advertising is a complete failure. Just like electoral reform and taking veterans back to court ? this is just another broken promise by the Trudeau government.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government continue to fail Canadians, as the recent Auditor General's Spring 2019

Reports demonstrate. Canadians want and deserve strong leadership to address the serious issues which were recently confirmed. We, the Conservative Official Opposition, are ready to provide this leadership to Canadians.