

Backgrounder: Teddy Waste Awards 2024

Federal

CBC President & CEO Catherine Tait (Winner)

Nominated for: Handing out millions in bonuses while announcing hundreds of job losses.

Cost: \$15 million

CBC President & CEO Catherine Tait announced plans to lay off hundreds of employees at the state broadcaster just weeks before Christmas 2023.

This came after the CBC dished out more than \$16 million in bonuses in 2022.

Soon after the announcement, Tait appeared on the CBC's nightly newscast, where she was asked by the anchor if bonuses were on the table for 2023 despite the layoffs.

Tait refused to say.

But access-to-information records obtained by the CTF show the CBC handed out \$15 million in bonuses in 2023.

That brings total bonuses at the CBC up to \$114 million since 2015.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/cbc-bonuses-total-15-million-in-2023#:~:text=The%20Canadian%20Broadcasting%20Corporation%20gave,by%20the%20Canadian%20Taxpayers%20Federation.>

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Nominee)

Nominated for: Hosting three "affordability" retreats in one year that cost taxpayers \$1.3 million.

Cost: \$1.3 million

Taxpayers can't afford any more of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's affordability retreats.

Between September 2022 and August 2023, Trudeau held three cabinet retreats aimed at tackling the cost-of-living crunch facing Canadians.

The first retreat was held in Vancouver and cost taxpayers \$471,000. Receipts obtained by the CTF show Trudeau and his ministers expensed taxpayers for filet mignon, grilled Dijon salmon, ceviche, prawn ravioli and key lime pie.

“It was really important for me to get that kind of direct fingertip feel of what is happening with the Canadian economy and what Canadians are feeling,” Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland told reporters in Vancouver.

In January 2023, Trudeau and his ministers flew to Hamilton, billing taxpayers for \$305,000. Food purchases included nearly \$3,500 worth of pop and juice, \$542 worth of potato chips, a \$250 cheese board and \$240 worth of cookies.

In August 2023, Trudeau and his ministers flew to Prince Edward Island, racking up \$485,000 in expenses, including \$100,000 worth of waterfront hotel rooms.

At the very least, Trudeau should consider renaming his affordability retreats.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/trudeau's-hamilton-cabinet-retreat-cost-more-than-300,000#:~:text=In%20the%20span%20of%20a,documents%20obtained%20by%20Blacklock's%20Reporter.>

MP Hedy Fry (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$600,000 on luxury hotel rooms that weren't used.

Cost: \$600,000

Taxpayers were hosed for nearly \$600,000 worth of luxury hotel rooms that weren't used after half of the delegates for a conference didn't show up or chose less expensive digs.

In the summer of 2023, Canada hosted the annual meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly in Vancouver.

MP Hedy Fry was the driving force behind Canada hosting the event.

Nearly half of the listed delegates for the conference didn't show up or chose to stay in less expensive hotels, leaving taxpayers on the hook for the unused rooms.

But don't worry taxpayers, Fry says in the future, she'll make sure organizations provide Canada with delegate numbers after they're certain who will be attending.

Six hundred thousand dollars is a lot to pay for that lesson learned.

Source:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/parliament-luxury-hotel-waste-1.7103490>

National Research Council of Canada

Nominated for: For giving hundreds of thousands to companies that want to turn crickets into human food.

Cost: \$420,000

Taste the crunch.

The federal government spent \$420,000 subsidizing companies specializing in turning crickets into human food, including “cricket energy bars” and cricket “steaks, sausages and falafels.”

Canadians are struggling with the high cost of grocery bills, but subsidizing snacks made from bugs doesn’t sound like the right solution for taxpayers.

Bon appétit.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/taste-the-crunch-cricket-corporate-welfare-cost-420k>

Parks Canada (Nominee)

Nominated for: Hunting deer at \$10,000 a head from a helicopter.

Cost: \$800,000

Parks Canada spent \$800,000 flying a foreign sharpshooter around in a helicopter on Sidney Island in British Columbia so he could kill deer Rambo style.

The sharpshooter, alongside two others hunting from the ground, managed to kill about 84 deer over the course of 10 days. Many of the deer killed were the wrong kind of deer.

Meanwhile, local hunters harvested dozens of deer at no cost to taxpayers.

The Parks Canada hunt cost taxpayers about \$10,000 per deer killed.

Source:

<https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/84-deer-killed-sidney-island>

Governor General Mary Simon (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$71,000 on limo services in Iceland.

Cost: \$71,000

Taxpayers were forced to pick up the tab for a \$71,000 bill from “Icelimo Luxury Travel” during Governor General Mary Simon’s four-day visit to Iceland.

Icelimo specializes in “genuine luxury travel life experiences ... crafted with flair and finesse entirely around your dreams,” according to its website.

The main conference centre was only about 700 metres from the hotel where Simon and 15 others stayed during the trip.

For \$71,000, Simon could have bought a brand-new BMW, drove it around the island and then left it outside the airport with the keys inside and still saved money.

Source:

<https://nationalpost.com/news/71k-in-limo-service-for-governor-generals-2022-four-day-iceland-trip>

Provincial

Alberta Foundation for the Arts (Winner)

Nominated for: Spending tens of thousands of dollars flying an Alberta artist around the world so she could produce art few taxpayers would ever willingly buy or pay to see.

Cost: \$30,000

Alberta Foundation for the Arts spent tens of thousands of dollars sending an artist to South Korea, Estonia and New York.

While in New York, the artist showcased a painting that looks like it belongs pinned up on mamma's fridge, not hanging in a gallery.

And while in South Korea, the artist flailed around on a futon for several minutes.

If the Alberta Foundation for the Arts is looking for a way to put Alberta art on the map, they may need to go back to the drawing board.

Source:

<https://open.canada.ca/data/dataset/e5df191a-4a14-48fa-96ed-68723a323cc4>

B.C. PavCo (Nominee)

Nominated for: Earmarking tens of millions of dollars for renovations to B.C. Place in advance of the FIFA '26 World Cup Games.

Cost: \$150 million

B.C. PavCo is the Crown corporation that oversees B.C. Place, where some of the FIFA '26 World Cup Games will be hosted.

In advance of the games, B.C. PavCo has earmarked \$150 million in taxpayer cash (and counting) for renovations at the stadium.

The renovations include new VIP suites, a new VIP entrance and a connector between the stadium and the casino.

Despite the fact taxpayers will be picking up the tab, most can't afford to set foot in many of the renovated areas.

Source:

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/bc-place-stadium-vancouver-fifa-world-cup-renovations-upgrades>

Former University of Manitoba Law Dean Jonathan Black-Branch (Nominee)

Nominated for: Racking up more than half-a-million in expenses.

Cost: \$500,000

Former University of Manitoba Law Dean Jonathan Black-Branch “devised a scheme” to mispend university and endowment funds, according to a disciplinary panel ruling.

The expenses included travel, tuition to prestigious ivy league schools like Harvard and Yale, numerous meals at the private Manitoba Club.

Source:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/jonathan-black-branch-panel-ruling-1.7065559#:~:text=Jonathan%20Black%2DBranch%20faced%20a,school%2C%20from%202016%20to%202020>.

Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston

Nominated for: Spending more than \$1 million on a barely used home-sharing app.

Cost: \$1.3 million

Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston spent \$1.3 million of taxpayer cash on a home-sharing app that sounds an awful lot like Kijiji or Rent Faster.

All told, there were 12 leases signed from users of Houston’s home-sharing app.

Source:

<https://happipad.com/nova-scotia/>

Quebec Finance Minister Eric Girard (Nominee)

Nominated for: Giving the Los Angeles Kings \$7 million in taxpayer cash to play two exhibition games in Quebec City.

Cost: \$7 million

Quebec Finance Minister Eric Girard is spending \$7 million so the Los Angeles Kings can play two pre-season games in Quebec City.

To make matters worse for taxpayers: other teams agreed to play for free in Wichita, Kansas, and Independence, Missouri.

Perhaps next time Girard can save taxpayers buckets of cash by picking up the phone and asking the Montreal Canadians to make the drive down to Quebec City.

Source:

<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/caq-mnas-question-7-million-in-public-funds-for-exhibition-games-with-l-a-kings#:~:text=On%20Tuesday%2C%20Quebec%20Finance%20Minister,the%20team%20to%20Quebec%20City.>

Municipal

City of Regina (Winner)

Nominated for: Wasting taxpayer money rebranding Tourism Regina to Experience Regina, then later reversing course.

Cost: \$30,000

The City of Regina wasted \$30,000 on a failed rebrand of its tourism entity that sparked a month-long campaign of backlash, ridicule and international media attention.

Tourism Regina was rebranded to Experience Regina to lean into an old joke often made about the city.

“Regina, the city that rhymes with fun.”

Five days after the rebrand was launched, the creative team behind the effort was forced to apologize. And a month later the entire rebrand was scrapped, with the city entity reverting to Tourism Regina.

Source:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/experience-regina-ends-1.6809256>

City of Montreal (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$426,000 on animal sculptures that are supposed to help crack down on crime in an unsafe neighbourhood.

Cost: \$426,000

Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante has some innovative ideas on reducing crime.

Instead of hiring more cops, Plante sought to address high crime rates and public disorder in one Montreal neighbourhood by spending \$426,000 on public art.

Animal sculptures, to be exact.

The sculptures are supposed to bring “love and beauty” back to the area and thus improve the “negative experience of passers-by.”

At least if you’re getting mugged, you’ll have a nice view.

Source:

<https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2023/05/17/a-montreal-on-cache-la-misere-derriere-des-sculptures-danimaux>

City of Edmonton (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$60 million on a fleet of electric buses that don’t work.

Cost: \$60 million

The City of Edmonton blew \$60 million of taxpayer cash on a fleet of electric buses that don’t work because they can’t cope with the cold weather.

After it was realized the electric buses wouldn’t work properly in the winter (who could have seen that coming?), the brain trust at city hall came up with a solution.

The city dropped another \$200,000 on blankets to swaddle the batteries to warm them up. Unfortunately, that didn’t work either.

The cherry on top? The city’s maintenance crews can’t find new parts to replace the broken-down buses, because the company that built them has since gone bankrupt.

Source:

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/more-than-half-of-edmontons-60-million-electric-bus-fleet-not-roadworthy>

City of Toronto (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$33,000 putting stickers on crack pipes.

Cost: \$33,000

The City of Toronto spent \$33,000 putting branded stickers on crack pipes and other illicit drug gear.

The branded crack and meth kits were then handed out for free at a needle exchange run by Toronto Public Health and distributed throughout the city’s shelter system.

To be clear: the city didn’t spend \$33,000 on the crack pipes, or on the drug itself. The city spent \$33,000 on the stickers it put on the crack pipes.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/toronto-spent-33,000-on-branded-stickers-for-crack-pipes#:~:text=The%20city%20of%20Toronto%20spent,by%20the%20Canadian%20Taxpayers%20Federation.>

City of Halifax (Nominee)

Nominated for: Losing 451 city-owned laptops that potentially contain “sensitive information.”

Halifax city hall’s IT department was so poorly run the auditor general had to step in.

Auditors raised numerous concerns, including poor cybersecurity and 451 “missing” city-owned laptops, and concluding the IT department lacked “appropriate oversight.”

Word on the street is you can score a great deal on some used laptops in the parking lot across from city hall.

Source:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-cybersecurity-audit-flags-hundreds-of-missing-computers-oversight-issues-1.6939402>

2024 Lifetime Achievement Award for Waste: Mission Cultural Fund

The Lifetime Achievement Award for Waste is the most prestigious of the Teddy Waste Awards.

Past recipients have included everyone from premiers and prime ministers to Bev Oda and Bombardier.

This year's winner gives us the answer to the following question:

What do a red-carpet photo exhibit, a Margaret Atwood birthday party, a sex toy art show in Germany, and live senior citizen sex story shows, all have in common?

Your tax dollars paid for them, thanks to a federal slush fund run by Global Affairs Canada called the Mission Cultural Fund.

The Mission Cultural Fund was created in 2016, with a \$1.8-million annual budget, to promote Canadian cultural diplomacy abroad.

During its lifetime, the Mission Cultural Fund was consistently over budget, with its average annual spending coming to about \$3.8 million.

The MCF spent \$51,000 on a red-carpet exhibit so Bryan Adams could show off photographs of his famous friends, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The MCF also dropped \$9,000 on a sex toy art show in Germany, and \$12,000 for foreign senior citizens to share their sex stories in front of a live audience.

Following a campaign from the CTF, the federal government shut down the MCF in 2023.

Because it was consistently overbudget, and spent buckets of taxpayer cash funding birthday parties and photo exhibits for celebrities, and sex-themed artistic 'performances,' the Mission Cultural Fund is a worthy recipient of this year's Teddy Lifetime Achievement Award for Waste.

Source:

https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/scrapping-wasteful-mission-cultural-fund-a-huge-win-for-taxpayers?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwlZixBhCoARIsAIC745Bcfq2S0kvq1MmKzfiwvJr3caE9E_HBWtrcWXqVibqKkLEslit89XIaAnCiEALw_wcB