

Backgrounder: Teddy Waste Awards 2026

Federal

Canada Revenue Agency (Winner)

Nominated for: Giving taxpayers the right answer just 17 per cent of the time.

Cost: \$22 billion

The Canada Revenue Agency employs 4,547 contact centre agents – 1,000 more than it did in 2019. With all those bureaucrats on payroll, you'd think getting a straight answer about taxes wouldn't be too much to ask.

But you'd be wrong.

The auditor general found that CRA bureaucrats answered individual tax questions correctly just 17 per cent of the time. When people ask about business taxes, the CRA only gives the correct answer 54 per cent of the time. And even then, the auditor general said the “completeness of response” was 31 per cent.

It gets worse. Canadians could only get a CRA bureaucrat on the phone 32 per cent of the time in 2024-25. Just 18 per cent of callers reached someone within 15 minutes.

Sources:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/auditor-general/media-room/canada-revenue-agencys-contact-centres-are-not-providing-taxpayers-with-timely-and-accurate-information.html>

<https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2025/pdf/2025-vol2-eng.pdf>

https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/oag-bvg/audit-reports/documents/parl_oag_202510_01_e.pdf

Department of Finance (Nominee)

Nominated for: Outsourcing the finance minister's budget speech.

Cost: \$12,168

Writing the federal budget speech is the first thing on the finance minister's to-do list. But Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne apparently couldn't get his homework done, so taxpayers were forced to pick up the tab for a consultant to write it.

The finance department spent \$12,168 on a "speechwriting contract" for the budget speech despite already employing a 23-person communications team that costs taxpayers an estimated \$2 million a year. That team includes a press secretary, a communications director, five communications advisors and an actual legislative speech writer.

To top it off, Champagne's budget told Canadians the government would be "limiting spending on external consultants."

Sources:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/finance-minister-spent-12k-getting-outside-help-to-write-budget-speech>

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/written-questions/45-1/q-817?highlight=q&expandquestion=true&response=13978407§ion=fin>

Parliament of Canada (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending more than \$1 million on two lavish Montreal conferences.

Cost: \$1,036,900

Two parliamentary conferences held in Montreal cost taxpayers more than \$1 million, according to expense disclosures reviewed by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

The highlights: a \$94,900 dinner reception, \$79,300 for a catered dinner from a company that describes itself as "the creator of gourmet emotions," \$36,000 for "health breaks" at a Montreal oyster bar and \$1,340 for musical spoons.

The government also spent \$10,850 on scarves for delegate bags, \$2,546 on lapel pins and \$915 on flower arrangements for the opening ceremony.

Taxpayers footed the entire bill. The Speaker's office confirmed no visiting delegates reimbursed Canadian taxpayers for any of the costs.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/two-montreal-conferences-cost-taxpayers-1-million>

Canada Council for the Arts (Nominee)

Nominated for: Subsidizing a book publisher that describes itself as “politically driven, not profit driven.”

Cost: \$306,900

Canada Council for the Arts gave \$306,900 to Fernwood Publishing, a Halifax- and Winnipeg-based company that openly says it’s politically driven, not profit driven.

Recently published titles include: *Red Flags: A Reckoning with Communism for the Future of the Left* and *Openings and Closures: Socialist Strategy at a Crossroads*. Despite the taxpayer handouts to Fernwood Publishing, one of those books has zero reviews and ranks #2,800,000.

Sources:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/taxpayers-call-on-governments-to-stop-funding-radical-publishers>

<https://www.amazon.ca/dp/1773637037>

The Senate (Nominee)

Nominated for: Expensing taxpayers for booze, disco, fine dining and minigolf.

Cost: \$116,100

Senators expensed \$116,100 on hospitality in 2025. That’s a 67 per cent increase over the previous year.

The Senate is supposed to be the chamber of “sober second thought.” But it expensed \$27,000 on alcohol from the LCBO, the SAQ, wineries and the Beer Store since 2019. The Senate also spent thousands on gifts, including \$1,600 on “gifts” from a distillery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Senators routinely billed taxpayers for lavish meals at high-end restaurants. They spent a combined \$20,500 on nine excursions to Le St-Estèphe, an upscale restaurant that serves French cuisine.

Senators spent \$790 to hire bartenders for a single event. They also held three receptions at Rivero Disco, costing taxpayers \$2,100. Yellow Pages describes the disco hall as “having an awesome light show.”

The Senate also billed taxpayers \$644 at a minigolf venue for a single “staff working session” and \$210 at an escape room.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/%E2%80%98sober%E2%80%99-senate-blows-tax-dollars-on-booze,-disco,-fine-dining-and-minigolf>

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending taxpayers’ money to nominate itself for awards.

Cost: \$93,058

The CBC spent \$93,000 to enter and attend the Radio Television Digital News Association of Canada awards between 2019 and 2024, according to access-to-information records obtained by the CTF. That includes \$54,390 in entry fees and \$38,668 in travel and attendance costs.

In 2025, 65 per cent of the RTDNA’s national nominees were from the CBC. The CBC is also listed as a platinum sponsor for the national awards gala – a sponsorship that costs approximately \$15,000.

The stories the CBC nominated itself for awards include: “Shoplifting through the eyes of the shoplifter,” “Should the Yukon River be considered a ‘person’ with rights?” and “Beetle Junk: An entomologist’s pursuit of glass blowing beetle genitalia.”

Sources:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/cbc-spent-93,000-to-enter-and-attend-rtdna-awards-since-2019>

<https://rtdnacanada.com/rtdna-canada-announces-2026-west-region-awards-finalists/>

<https://rtdnacanada.com/rtdna-canada-announces-2026-central-region-awards-finalists/>

Provincial

British Columbia Premier David Eby (Winner)

Nominated for: Wasting hundreds of thousands on fake soccer balls.

Cost: \$354,000

The B.C. government spent \$354,000 on three “wood-leather soccer balls” for display purposes, according to records obtained by the CTF. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Forests both funded the project.

Premier David Eby and Agriculture Minister Lana Popham posed with one of the fake soccer balls at the Osaka Expo in June, while every other premier was attending a first ministers’ meeting in Saskatoon.

“Wood leather is a B.C. innovation,” Eby said. “While this won’t be used in any FIFA matches soon, it represents B.C.’s creativity and leadership.”

Sources:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/wood-leather-receipts-show-b.c.-government-must-cut-wasteful-spending>

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/carson-binda-b-c-information-150035801.html>

SK Arts (Nominee)

Nominated for: Handing out millions for art that few taxpayers would ever willingly pay to see or buy.

Cost: \$7 million annually

SK Arts receives close to \$7 million a year from Saskatchewan taxpayers. Here’s a sample of what that money funds:

A \$1,000 grant went to record a music video for a song titled, Baby Back B*tch. When the CTF broke the story, it had fewer than 200 views on YouTube. It now has 1,810.

A \$4,747 grant paid for post-production on a short film titled, F*ck.

Two separate grants, \$6,000 and \$5,000, went to artists to take paid leave from work to write songs. Another \$757 grant was awarded to help an artist write another grant application to take more tax dollars.

SK Arts also gave \$5,007 to a band for a “creative” retreat at Anglin Lake, \$1,000 for someone to attend a drag-clown workshop in Ontario and \$12,500 to an already-published author to write a young adult novel about a teenager caught in a time loop.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/saskatchewan-needs-to-defund-art-slush-fund>

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$755,809 on a report riddled with fake AI-generated citations.

Cost: \$755,809

The Newfoundland and Labrador government spent \$755,809 on a report to modernize its education system. That report contained at least 15 citations for sources that don’t exist. Academics suggested the fake citations were likely generated by artificial intelligence.

One citation referenced a 2008 National Film Board movie called *Schoolyard Games*. The film does not exist.

Despite these incorrect citations, the report included a section on how AI in schools must be used in an ethical manner.

Sources:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nl-education-accord-spending-9.6950103>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/education-accord-nl-sources-dont-exist-1.7631364>

Government of Manitoba (Nominee)

Nominated for: Launching a billboard ad campaign claiming a gas tax hike was a gas tax cut.

Cost: \$90,548

The Manitoba government spent \$90,548 on a taxpayer-funded ad campaign featuring billboards with the slogan, “Permanent gas tax cut starting January 1st.”

There’s just one problem. On Jan. 1, 2025, the government hiked its gas tax by 12.5 cents per litre.

Manitoba had cut its gas tax to zero for all of 2024. The following year, the Manitoba government hiked gas taxes by 12.5 cents per litre.

A Manitoba family filling up a minivan and a pickup truck once every two weeks paid about \$550 more in gas taxes in 2025 than they did in 2024.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/manitoba-spent-91,000-on-misleading-gas-tax-ad-campaign>

Government of Quebec (Nominee)

Nominated for: Building a gas price website when many websites already provide that information for free.

Cost: \$190,000

The Quebec government spent \$190,000 building “Prix Essence Québec,” a website that shows motorists where to find cheaper gas. Apparently, the government has never heard of GasBuddy, Google Maps or Waze who already do this for free.

Before spending the money, the Quebec Energy Board admitted it didn’t compare its planned website with existing private options.

The government created its website to help drivers save money by shopping around. But Quebec is the only province still charging a consumer carbon tax.

Instead of wasting tax dollars creating a website with information that companies already provide for free, here’s how the Quebec government should save drivers money: Scrap the carbon tax!

Sources:

<https://piluleroche.ca/prix-essence-quebec-une-facture-de-177-000-pour-reinventer-gasbuddy/>

<https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2026/04/11/le-pionnier-des-sites-du-prix-de-lessence-au-quebec>

Ontario's Finch West LRT (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$3.7 billion on a light rail line slower than the bus it replaced.

Cost: \$3.7 billion

Toronto's Finch West LRT opened in December 2025 after years of delays. The cost ballooned from \$2.5 billion to \$3.7 billion – nearly 50 per cent over budget.

But the punchline isn't the train's cost overruns. It's the train's speed.

The Finch West LRT travels at 12 km/h.

The Number 36 bus the LRT was meant to replace kept running after the train started operating. Finch West train riders could watch the bus zip past them from their seats.

Sources:

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/torontos-latest-transit-triumph-is-3-7b-for-a-train-slower-than-a-bus>

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/taxpayers-call-on-auditor-general-to-investigate-metrolinx%E2%80%99s-smarttrack-debacle>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/finch-west-lrt-first-monday-9.7006698>

Municipal

City of Toronto (Winner)

Nominated for: Buying a plaque for a dead raccoon.

Cost: \$1,936

In 2015, a raccoon died on a Toronto sidewalk. The city took 14 hours to remove it. Torontonians left flowers and candles for the dead raccoon, Conrad, and the hashtag #DeadRaccoonTO went viral.

Ten years later, Heritage Toronto decided the moment deserved a permanent plaque. It spent \$1,936 for the memorial, according to documents obtained by the CTF.

Toronto Animal Services recovers about 4,000 dead raccoons every year. Conrad is the only one to get a plaque.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/city-hall-wasted-2,000-on-plaque-for-a-dead-raccoon>

City of Saskatoon (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending thousands on an AI garbage can that gets it wrong nearly two-thirds of the time.

Cost: \$26,262

The city of Saskatoon spent \$23,657 on an AI trash bin called “Oscar Sort” – a large flatscreen monitor that tells people which bin to put their garbage in.

The city added \$1,805 for matching bins and another \$800 for a tent to house Oscar at the Saskatoon Jazz Festival.

But it turns out Saskatoon’s artificial intelligence trash bin isn’t very intelligent.

Oscar Sort recorded a 37.6 per cent accuracy rate in July 2025 – down from 49 per cent the month before.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/taxpayers-stuck-with-26,000-bill-for-ai-garbage-can>

Cape Breton Regional Police (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$23,000 on security for a peaceful protest.

Cost: \$23,201

Hundreds of Cape Bretoners gathered peacefully in October 2025 to protest Ottawa’s gun confiscation scheme. The Cape Breton Regional Police responded by shutting down their entire station for the day and deploying 26 officers at a cost of \$22,548, plus \$653 on private security.

Number of incidents at the protest: Zero.

Number of deployed units actually used: Zero.

Cost to taxpayers: \$23,201.

Source:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/cape-breton-police-wasted-more-than-23,000-preparing-for-peaceful-gun-grab-protest>

City of Sainte-Thérèse (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending \$225,000 on a water slide.

Cost: \$225,471

The City of Sainte-Thérèse, Quebec spent \$225,471 replacing a single water slide at a local pool.

Only one contractor submitted a bid – and refused to lower the price. The mayor called it “exorbitant” but approved the spending anyway.

Source:

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/2186698/cout-glissade-piscine-sainte-therese-trump>

City of Richmond (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending tens of thousands of dollars sending eight bureaucrats to Europe for a 10-minute speech.

Cost: \$77,787

A top bureaucrat at the city of Richmond gave a 10-minute speech at the Smart Cities and Sport summit in Switzerland. Seven colleagues came along for the trip, which also included a stop in Barcelona.

The delegation stayed at five-star hotels – including the Royal Savoy in Switzerland and the Majestic Hotel and Spa in Barcelona. Bureaucrats on the trip refused economy plane tickets and instead dropped \$5,000 on plane tickets.

Sources:

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11259889/richmond-mayor-questioned-over-europe-trip/>

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11261614/city-richmond-controversies/>

<https://globalnews.ca/video/11441340/luxury-travel-for-richmond-delegation>

City of Calgary (Nominee)

Nominated for: Spending millions to come up with the slogan “Blue Sky City.”

Cost: \$4.8 million

Calgary’s Economic Development and Tourism departments spent \$4.8 million to rebrand the city. It consulted 129 organizations across 26 sectors. After two years of research and engagement, the result was a new slogan: Blue Sky City.

The name was chosen because Calgary is Canada’s sunniest major city. In other words, bureaucrats spent \$4.8 million when all they needed to do was look up to the sky.

Source:

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/calgary/article/calgary-ushers-in-blue-sky-city-era-with-new-welcome-signs/>

Lifetime Achievement Award

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

Cost: \$1 billion annually

The Lifetime Achievement Award for Waste is the most prestigious of the Teddy Waste Awards. Past recipients have included everyone from Justin Trudeau to Bombardier and Bev Oda.

This year, the award goes to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

The SSHRC costs taxpayers more than \$1 billion a year. The government claims it funds research on “the issues that matter most to Canadians.”

Here’s what that looks like in practice:

The SSHRC spent \$105,000 on a report about the “birth, life and death of an urban grocery cart.” After seven years, the report still isn’t done.

It spent \$94,000 on a study of selfies, including “fat fashion photography on Instagram” and selfies that “violate social norms.” This was the researcher’s own description of her work: “Basically, I fart around on the internet for most of my teaching and research.”

It spent \$20,000 studying the gender politics of Peruvian rock music, \$17,500 on a study about “heterosexual casual sex among young adults living in Jasper,” \$17,500 on a study about disgraced former rodeo princesses and \$20,000 funding research about “letters to a porn star.”

The SSHRC also dropped \$73,786 on a study titled, *Are Kinksters Doing It Better? Gaining Insights on Sexual Wellbeing from Kink Community Members to Promote Flourishing.*

For answering questions that nobody asked at a price tag of \$1 billion a year, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council is a worthy recipient of this year’s Lifetime Achievement Award for Waste.

Sources:

<https://www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/feds-shell-out-thousands-for-absurd-research-grants>

<https://www.taxpayer.com/news-room-archive/%E2%80%9CScrewed%20U%E2%80%9D%20%20Grants%20Honorary%20Doctorate%20to%20SSHRC%20%20for%20Wacky%20University%20Research%20Funding>