

# Anthony Furey: We Need Government Accountability in Canada at All Levels

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"Out of Service" signs are shown on the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, which has been under construction for 10 years, in Toronto on May 5, 2023. The Canadian Press/Frank Gunn



By Anthony Furey

11/15/2024

Updated: 11/15/2024

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*Commentary*

Last week, a major Toronto infrastructure project celebrated a sad milestone. Nov. 4 marked the 14th anniversary since the beginning of the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT.

The long-delayed and over-budget project has become a symbol of how impossible it seems to both get public projects done in Canada and also the general lack of accountability such projects face.

The Crosstown project isn't particularly complicated. It's a 19 kilometre train line with 25 stops that is both above and below ground at different parts of the line.



These sorts of lines are regularly being constructed all over the world. And, by and large, they're built much more efficiently in those other jurisdictions.



The constant delays and cost overruns are beyond acceptable and something had to be done to hold them to account.



Yet despite rising public frustration, very little has been done to get accountability.

Something similar happened with the new LRT line in Ottawa, the nation's capital. During the first winter it was in operation, trains would stop and the line would come to a close. The reason was found to be that the system wasn't well-prepared for winter conditions. In a city that's known for having a colder, snowier winter than Toronto, that's just unacceptable from a planning perspective.

There are many other projects in Canada moving at a glacial pace. Military procurement at the federal level is a total mess—costs are ballooning, projects are delayed and no one is minding the till. The federal government's national shipbuilding strategy is the single largest expense ever undertaken in our nation's history, and yet few people know about it and not enough details about the terms of the contract are made public.

Back to Toronto, a lane of the vital Gardiner Expressway was set to be closed for three years for a repair job that other countries would do in a matter of months. Although the Ontario government has recently announced they can now accomplish it in two years.

The problem with all of this isn't just the delays and inefficiencies. It's also the lack of serious accountability in getting to the bottom of why this happened and what will be done to ensure it doesn't happen again.

We can laugh these things off by telling ourselves that the government is known to be less efficient than the private sector, which holds true. But it's now beyond that and requires a more aggressive response. These boondoggles have gotten to the point where they are a drag on our productivity and our quality of life.

Where are the inquiries? Where are the hearings?

The truth is there are no meaningful probes on the horizon and we just don't have real answers to any of these questions. Meanwhile, taxpayers continue to be on the hook and families continue to suffer from being poorly served by their government.

Better is possible. We just have to look elsewhere for examples.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Justice brought [federal bribery charges](#) against 70 New York City Housing Authority employees. The superintendents of government housing buildings are alleged to have collectively taken \$2 million in kickbacks from contractors for awarding them jobs that didn't require a bid.

The culture of getting to the bottoms of things in the public service is still ingrained in the American psyche. These sorts of probes happen much more frequently in the United States.

They aren't just undertaken by prosecutors—they're also unearthed by political committees and hearings and media exposes. We just don't really do that in Canada these days.

That's a shame, because people want accountability. That's a word that I hear from more and more voters. They want the system to do a better job of getting to the bottom of things and for people to be held to account.

*Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

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