



CTF Report on Expense Claims filed by  
the Honourable Jim Prentice as Minister  
of Indian Affairs and Northern  
Development

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## Summary of Findings

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) has conducted a review of the Honourable Jim Prentice's expense claims as the federal minister of Indian Affairs (now Aboriginal Affairs) and Northern Development and found at least one major irregularity worth bringing to attention.

The CTF was informed by the department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AAND) that Mr. Prentice's expense claims as the minister of that department – requested in an Access to Information (ATI) request – were destroyed. The CTF filed subsequent ATI requests to ascertain if this was true or not and was soon informed by AAND that in fact, the records were not destroyed.

The CTF questions the validity of the reasons given for the “destroyed” records and the completeness of the records eventually released.

Mr. Prentice also chartered a private aircraft from the Calgary International Airport with three of his staffers, where it flew to the Calgary Springbank Airport to pick him up. The chartered aircraft then flew to Fort MacLeod, a small town a short driving distance away from Calgary. The aircraft flew at between 27 per cent and 50 per cent capacity and cost an average of \$742.73 for each passenger to travel the short distance. This appears to be in clear contravention of travel rules set out by the Parliament of Canada.

## Background

After the resignation Alison Redford from the premiership, Albertans were concerned about the abuse of expenses and entitlements of politicians. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) committed to ensuring that Albertans would have as much information as possible in determining if the next premier's record of expense claims were above-board or not.

This meant obtaining the expense claims of any potential candidates for the Progressive Conservative (PC) leadership.

### Thomas Lukaszuk

The CTF had already filed Freedom of Information (FOI) requests for the expense claims of Thomas Lukaszuk and most of the cabinet in October of 2012. The [CTF released those expense claims](#) in November of 2012. The [CTF found several lavish expense claims](#) by Mr. Lukaszuk, including \$500 a night hotel stays. Soon after this, the government [launched its expense disclosure website](#) based on the CTF's recommendations.

Since that time, the CTF has regularly tracked Mr. Lukaszuk's expense claims on the government's expense disclosure website. In December of 2013, the [CTF called out Mr. Lukaszuk for a \\$9,090 European junket](#).

Recent revelations about a [\\$20,000 roaming fee](#) were not made public on the government's expense disclosure website or to the CTF in its FOI request of October 2012.

### Ric McIver

The CTF also monitored the expense claims of Ric McIver after being elected as an MLA in April of 2012. In its regular reviews of ministerial expenses, the CTF has yet to find anything that raises concern.

Upon Mr. McIver's entrance into the PC leadership race, the CTF filed a FOI request for his [expense claims with the City of Calgary](#) for the time that he was an alderman. The CTF thoroughly reviewed the expense claims provided, and also found nothing of interest.

### Jim Prentice

Upon the resignation of Ms. Redford, Jim Prentice was immediately touted as a potential replacement. On March 27, 2014, the CTF filed Access to Information (ATI)

requests with the three federal departments which Mr. Prentice had been the minister of: Indian Affairs (now Aboriginal Affairs), Industry and Environment.

## Records “destroyed”

### MIDA

In response to the CTF’s request for Mr. Prentice’s expense claims filed with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AAND), [the department informed the CTF on May 7, 2014](#) that it had destroyed all of Mr. Prentice’s expense records and receipts under the ‘[Multi-Institutional Disposition Authorities](#)’ (MIDA). On the same day, the CTF referred AAND to [Section 4.1 of the MIDA](#), which explicitly exempts nearly all documents in a ministers’ office from destruction.

The CTF requested an internal review to determine if any mistakes had been made. One month later, [AAND reaffirmed that it had made no mistakes and had destroyed all of the records requested](#).

Without any documents, the [CTF released AANDs’ response](#) publicly on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The CTF reserved judgment about the potential appropriateness of Mr. Prentice’s any expenses, but expressed disappointment that taxpayers had no way of viewing them in any detail.

### Double-Checking

The CTF did not accept the departments’ application of the MIDA regulations, and had suspicions about the reliability of the department’s response. The CTF filed other ATI requests to ‘double-check’ if all was as the department claimed.

The CTF subsequently filed four new ATI requests. These were for:

- The exact same request for Churck Strahl’s expenses, the AAND minister directly following Mr. Prentice.
- The exact same request for Andy Scott’s expenses, the Liberal AAND minister directly preceding Mr. Prentice.
- The exact same request for Stephen Harper’s expenses during the same time period which AAND claims it had to destroy the records for Mr. Prentice.
- All internal department correspondence concerning the destruction of Mr. Prentice’s expenses and the application of the MIDA.

## Records 'Not' Destroyed, Anymore

### "Mistakenly" labeled boxes

On April 20, 2014, [AAND informed the CTF](#) that – in fact – the records had not been destroyed, and that it had “mistakenly” informed the CTF that the records requested (Mr. Prentice’s expenses) were not in their possession.

According to AAND, it had “misabeled” boxes of records, leading to the false claim that the expense records requested had been destroyed.

The CTF finds this explanation to be extraordinary and has serious concerns about the completeness of the records eventually provided under the circumstances.

Further, AAND has yet to say who authorized to “destruction” of the records and when.

On August 1, 2014, AAND provided 3,264 pages and 348MB of documents to the CTF.

## Expenses: Indian and Northern Affairs

The CTF reviewed the documents and found at least one irregularity.

The public and interested parties are encouraged to view them for themselves.

### Questionable Calgary-Fort MacLeod Charter Flight

#### Document 2, pages: 1,464-1,467

In the fallout from former premier Redford's abuse of government planes, Mr. Prentice has pledged that "[I will not be riding anything other than commercial flights whenever it is possible.](#)"

This statement appears to be at odds with a King Air 100 chartered by Mr. Prentice to fly the long distance between Calgary and Fort MacLeod.

According to the documents, Mr. Prentice had a private aircraft chartered to take his staff from the Calgary International Airport and himself and his daughter from the Calgary Springbank Airport to Fort MacLeod. [Google Maps](#) estimates that it is a 1 hour and fifty-one minute drive from Calgary to Fort MacLeod.

It is debatable if this short haul flight was an efficient mode of travel or not; but was it economical?

The King Air 100 chartered by Mr. Prentice for \$2,970.92 has a capacity of between [eight](#) and [15](#) passengers. While originally planning for five passengers, the flight ultimately flew with just four after his daughter was dropped from the passenger list. That is between 27 per cent and 50 per cent capacity. That works out to \$742.73 for each passenger to travel a short distance to a nearby town that many Calgarians visit on a Sunday afternoon drive.

According to the Parliament of Canada,

[Members and their authorized travellers must select the \*most economical and practical means of transportation to reach their destinations and use the most direct route available.\*](#) (Emphasis added)

It is difficult to see how this short-haul flight from the Calgary International Airport, to the Springbank Airport to Fort MacLeod was "economical," "practical," or "direct."

## Conclusion

The CTF raises the above expense claim as cause for concern, but welcomes any clarification or explanation of the charges by Mr. Prentice. Documents obtained by ATI or FOI often lack context and require further explanation.

The circumstances under which the CTF eventually came to obtain the documents however raise serious questions about the completeness of the records and possibly, political interference in the ATI process.

The CTF intends to release expense records pertaining to Mr. Prentice's time as the ministers of Industry and Environment as those records become available.