

# Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

## Governing Migration Through ArriveCAN at the Canadian Border

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### B.A. Applied Criminology (Honours) Thesis



DOUGLAS COLLEGE

# GOVERNING MIGRATION THROUGH ARRIVECAN AT THE CANADIAN BORDER

by

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## Introduction

In March 2020, the world experienced a global pandemic due to the immense and rapid spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This disease was first discovered in China as a case of pneumonia but was later deemed an outbreak in December 2019 (Ciotti, 2020). COVID-19 was a respiratory virus that led to the death of thousands of people (Ciotti, 2020). As a result of the severity of the virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic on March 12, 2020 (Ciotti, 2020). Most people who contracted this virus experienced mild to moderate symptoms of respiratory illness, but some people experienced severe symptoms and required medical attention (World Health Organization, 2024). The people who experienced severe illness were older and had underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, or chronic respiratory disease (World Health Organization, 2024). Even though older people who had underlying medical conditions were more likely to suffer from severe illness as a result of contracting COVID-19, the World Health Organization made it clear that anyone could contract the virus and die from it, no matter their age (World Health Organization, 2024).

The spread of the virus across the globe was rampant. Not only did touching others cause the spread of the virus, but sneezing, coughing, breathing, singing, and speaking near others caused the virus to spread quickly and easily as well (World Health Organization, 2024). As a result of this spread, a pandemic was declared, with many public health restrictions (World Health Organization, 2024). These restrictions included wearing masks to avoid the spread of the virus by mouth, quarantining if one was ill, showing proof of vaccination, and much more. The biggest public health restriction the Canadian public faced was the so-called “lockdown measures” (Government of Canada, 2021). This lockdown led to the closure of many places,

such as schools, businesses, parks, gyms, venues, and places of worship (Government of Canada, 2024). People were not allowed to leave their homes unless it was for necessary purposes, such as obtaining food, medicine, vaccines, etc. Only places with essential products and services remained open, such as pharmacies, grocery stores, and clinics, but other non-essential places were shut down. When people were able to travel to these essential places, they would have to follow the guidelines of social isolation as well (Rutty, 2023). This meant that people were required to wear masks and keep a six-foot (or approximately two-metre) distance from one another to avoid the spread of the virus. This lockdown remained for many months, depending on the province (Rutty, 2023). Some provinces remained in lockdown for a few months, whereas others remained in lockdown for nearly one year (Rutty, 2023).

Due to this virus, restrictions were placed on international travel as well. All non-essential travel was prohibited, and only a few cities in Canada were accepting international flights (Detsky, 2020). Along with this, the Canadian land border with the United States of America was closed for all purposes, apart from essential workers or goods (Detsky, 2020). If one were to travel, one would need to show proof of vaccination and may have had to quarantine for fourteen days (Detsky, 2020). As these restrictions were placed on travellers at the Canadian ports of entry, they contributed further to the digitization and technologization of the border (Lalonde, 2019). Digitization and technologization at the border have been thoroughly researched. They replace the quick decision-making of Canadian Border Services Officers (BSOs) with information in databases about travellers entering Canada (Lalonde, 2019). This technology at the border is seen as cyborg work, which produces images and information for officers to access (Bogard, 1996, as cited in Lalonde, 2023). Officers have access to this information, which allows them to use this technology to render decisions about travellers

(Bogard, 1996, as cited in Lalonde, 2023). Digitized information on travellers allows many decisions (i.e., whether to release or refer a traveller for a secondary examination, whether to deny a foreign national entry to Canada, etc.) to be pre-coded in databases, which effectively serves to limit the extent to which BSOs are able to make discretionary decisions (Lalonde, 2018).

One specific technology that was used at Canadian ports of entry during COVID-19 was the ArriveCAN application (hereafter, “app”). This app was designed to speed up lines at the border during COVID-19 and was seen as a digitized border security measure during this time, which led to restrictions for travellers (Wylie, 2022). It was seen as a technology that travellers could use to provide their information to ports of entry before they arrived (Wylie, 2022). This included requirements that travellers (both residents and non-residents of Canada) upload their proof of vaccination and a negative PCR test (proving that they did not have COVID-19) prior to arriving at a port of entry (Wylie, 2022). This was designed to save time for the travellers as well as the officers, allowing for pre-collected digital information to be scanned and analyzed rapidly, which in turn would allow travellers to quickly move through airports and land border crossings, ensuring the safety of everyone (Wylie, 2022). Accordingly, ArriveCAN brought along the promise that international travel restrictions could be gradually eased in a safe and efficient way.

COVID-19 border restrictions have had a cursory examination from a criminological context (i.e., Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016; Lybecker et al., 2018; Chaulagain et al., 2022; Cliffe, 2020). However, ArriveCAN as a technology of border security remains understudied. This study adds to the interdisciplinary literature – and the criminological literature specifically – on the digitization and technologization of the border, specifically in relation to the construction and uses of the ArriveCAN app. Additionally, while this app was used during COVID-19, it also

continues to be used to this day as a mechanism to compel travellers to pre-report data of various kinds to the Canada Border Services Agency (Frowd et al., 2023). As such, this study focuses on how the ArriveCAN app was/is constructed (or understood) by various social actors (the Government of Canada, the border officer union, travellers, etc.) as well as the apparent transition from COVID-19 public health restriction to the evidently voluntary, pre-emptive tool of data collection for customs and immigration purposes to this day.

Many documents in relation to the ArriveCAN application were examined. Content analysis was conducted to examine these documents, which include newspaper articles, parliamentary committee hearing testimony, the House of Commons Hansard, public information, and CBSA Union comments. Along with content analysis, a discourse analysis took place to examine these documents as well. This analysis delved deeper into issues of governmentality surrounding the ArriveCAN app during COVID-19 (and after), and how the government and other social actors constructed the app. This study took an exploratory and generative approach because the ArriveCAN app and its relationship to border security have been studied as a cursory examination, but this study dove deeper into the app, its uses, and how it has been constructed by the Government of Canada, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Customs and Immigration Union, and the general public. In this way, this study employed an inductive approach that is best suited for generative and exploratory studies.

## **Literature Review**

Research on the Canadian border, in general and during COVID-19, has been conducted in detail in the criminological literature. This previous research delves deep into the Canadian border and its responsibilities, as well as the restrictions that were put in place at the border during COVID-19. One study, by Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes (2016), points out that visual

media have played a significant role in portraying the responsibilities of the Canadian border, and display a relationship between a welcoming nation and a “threatening foreign immigrant Other” (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016, p. 81). Their study describes the border and immigration in the media, and what the border does, including their work, their locations, why they do what they do, etc. (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016). It highlights how they surveil and protect the border and Canadians from potential threats, such as drugs that may enter internationally, as well as how the officers are portrayed in a positive discourse (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016). The findings in the analysis point out that the show was a dialectical juxtaposition that showed Canada in opposition to the United States (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016). Canada is shown as superior to the United States in this show, and it represents a colour and nation-blindness, with specific attention towards nation, race, class, and gender constructions (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016). As their study continued, they found that the only opposition to the show was the issues of informed consent and privacy protection (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016).

The Canadian border security show, *Border Security: Canada's Front Line*, showed issues in privacy protection as well as informed consent (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016). These issues suggested that the privacy of travellers at the border was not respected due to the recording that was conducted for the show (Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016). For example,

Over 23,000 people signed a petition calling for the show's cancellation in 2013, after *Border Security* cameras accompanied the CBSA on an immigration raid in Vancouver. The eight undocumented migrants apprehended at the site were asked to sign release forms that would allow footage of the raid to be aired on the series. The BC Civil Liberties Union filed complaints against the show, and the detainees withdrew consent, voiding the footage (Crawford, 2013, as cited in Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2016, p. 83).



As pointed out, the privacy of the undocumented migrants was an issue, and they withdrew their consent for the video footage to be aired.

The media has a big hand in shaping opinions held by the public. More specifically, when the media films or portrays the border, the image of the border in the media influences public opinion about the border (Lybecker et al., 2018). Lybecker et al. (2018) conducted a study about the Canadian border and how it is viewed through new media sources, such as YouTube. These videos show the work of the border and the officers (Lybecker et al., 2018). They are available for public viewing around the globe, and the government cannot fully control what is uploaded or shown in these videos due to the abundance of videos (Lybecker et al., 2018). In this sense, since the government may not be able to control all of the content that is posted on YouTube, the public may sometimes view videos that the government would not want the public to have access to, and this leads to policy issues; for example, as mentioned in this study, “the Arab Spring perspectives presented over new media helped construct the image of Mideast countries’ governments as non-democratic” (Lybecker et al., 2018, p.530). The results from this study show that the public was interested in videos that involved border security and the lives/responsibilities of the officers (Lybecker et al., 2018). This shows that previous research (including the media) has had a significant impact on understanding the Canadian border.

During COVID-19, the Canadian border changed and introduced restrictions at the border for travellers. These restrictions included wearing masks, showing proof of vaccination, quarantining if someone was ill, and more. The Canadian government had closed off borders, but eventually, they reopened for ‘essential’ purposes (Chaulagain et al., 2022). This meant that only essential entry and labour were allowed into Canada during this time (Chaulagain et al., 2022). Chaulagain et al. define the term “essentialization” as “the differential treatment of subjects

based on their perceived value to sustaining the economy, health, and social fabric of a given country, that influences how governments prioritize who can enter and whose labour is required to support national needs” (2022, p. 723-724). This process of essentialization took place as a biopolitical mechanism that was controlled by the government in order to access the labour pool that was available outside of Canada and already existed within Canada (Chaulagain et al., 2022). This mechanism prioritizes movement at the border while still protecting the health and safety of citizens (Chaulagain et al., 2022). COVID-19 disrupted patterns of normal social and economic life and, as a result, disrupted the existing biopolitical norms that controlled the population (Chaulagain et al., 2022).

The government used the COVID-19 pandemic to justify the process of essentialization as a biopolitical mechanism. However, in order to ensure the continued functioning of the Canadian economy and society, eventually the border had to become more ‘elastic’ during the pandemic (Chaulagain et al., 2022). As the border became more ‘elastic,’ more entry and use of temporary foreign workers, international students, and people with uncertain status were allowed entry in order to sustain national life (Chaulagain et al., 2022). This concept of ‘elasticity’ makes border practices during COVID-19 dynamic yet strategic because the government and border are only fluid with those they consider essential (Chaulagain et al., 2022). As this concept points out, the border expands and narrows and is malleable in accordance with the priorities and interests of the government (Chaulagain et al., 2022). As the border became more ‘elastic’ and essentialization took place, more circulation of goods and people took place in order to sustain economic life.

CBSA and the government used essentialization and elasticity, but they also used bio-surveillance to protect citizens from COVID-19 and to prevent the spread of this virus during the

pandemic. Bio-surveillance is a form of surveillance that monitors any threats to public health (Cliffe, 2020). As Cliffe explains, “in its least intrusive form, bio-surveillance involves using phone data – and other tools such as CCTV – to monitor how populations as a whole are behaving” (2020, p. 3). It can also be used in a more targeted way because,

As coronavirus tests become cheaper and more widespread, governments are learning more about who is infected. They can then use phone data, CCTV footage, temperature checkpoints, airline and railway bookings, credit card information, e-commerce records, social media use and in some places facial recognition and even drones to monitor the spread of the disease case-by-case (Cliffe, 2020, p. 4).

Bio-surveillance was used by the government as a way to loosen restrictions during COVID-19, without the risk of a second wave of COVID-19, by ensuring that the people who have or may have contracted the virus stay isolated from others (Cliffe, 2020). In order to accomplish this, the government monitored and controlled the behaviour and actions of the population, specifically at the border (Cliffe, 2020).

As COVID-19 continued and bio-surveillance ensued, countries, including Canada, were faced with many difficulties. One of these difficulties was the “coronavirus trilemma” (Cliffe, 2020, p. 2). This concept allows people, or in this case, countries, to pick two of three options, but all three options are unable to be picked (Cliffe, 2020). The three options during COVID-19 that countries faced to control this virus while protecting the public were: limit deaths, lift lockdowns slowly, or sustain civil liberties (Cliffe, 2020). Countries chose the first two options at the cost of the third, which was bio-surveillance (Cliffe, 2020). They decided that limiting deaths and lifting lockdowns was more crucial than people’s civil liberties, in this case, their privacy (Cliffe, 2020).

The digitization of border security has been researched, specifically the technologization of the border and border officer work as well. In this sense, there is a lot of previous research in the criminological literature about digital technologies used at the border. One study, by Lalonde (2023), points out the digitization and technologization of the Canadian border. One way that the border has become digitized and technologized is due to border security shifting from being predicated on a visa or a passport towards a risk-based, pre-emptive scheme of surveillance (Lalonde, 2023). This allows a pre-collection and pre-assessment of risk before a traveller crosses a port of entry (Lalonde, 2023). In this way, border security schemes of immigration governance have shifted to pre-emptive, risk and control-based surveillance that is digitized from frontline determinations and surveillance (Lalonde, 2023). This study found that this pre-emptive and technology-based border led to impersonal experiences for border officials and non-officials due to the personal narrative of the traveller becoming irrelevant, and the decision-making of officers being dependent on information in databases (Lalonde, 2023). It also points out that this technologization leads to many dangers at the border, such as,

Database errors having demonstrable consequences on the mobility and rights of human beings; the colonization of the lifeworld of BSOs by digitized risk technologies ultimately rendering officers incapable of asking questions, looking for indicators, and making informed decisions on the basis of anything other than databases; and the associated human rights, privacy, and legal implications that are potentially wide-ranging and extremely troubling (Lalonde, 2023, p. 723).

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the creation of the ArriveCAN app, which furthers the digitization and technologization of the border. This app asked for a lot of information, including personal information, about travellers when they were travelling during COVID-19 (Wylie, 2022). As this app was mandatory during this time, travellers were coerced to fill out this information in the app in order to travel (Wylie, 2022). This coercion of stating personal

information shows the issues of privacy that came with the use of the app. Even though it began as a way for the government to enforce the *Quarantine Act*, it slowly became a technology that would preclear and preassess travellers by collecting personal information about these travellers as well as information about their vaccination status (Frowd et al., 2023). As Frowd et al. suggest, “appification” has been occurring, which is

The proliferation of “border” apps, whether for electronic travel authorizations, passenger name records (PNR), customs declarations, border clearance, vaccine passports or visa application purposes, is becoming commonplace in border management. In each of these cases, apps are the interface between the person on the move - conceived of as a user - and a broader computational logic of the border (Frowd et al., 2023, p. 318).

As the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated, the need for reduced human interaction resulted in many countries discarding paper declaration tools and instead using more “touchless” tools for authentication, such as the use of apps (Frowd et al., 2023).

Mutlu et al. (2025) also portray the increasing use of apps and devices for border control as “appification.” This study shows that these apps are used by the governments for purposes such as visa applications, customs declarations, and asylum requests, and compartmentalizes these app and their “appification” into three principles (Mutlu et al., 2025). The first principle is infrastructure, which relies on existing technology, the second is efficiency, which aims to efficiently target travellers, and the third is individualization, which leverages the use of personal devices for more precise control on mobility (Mutlu et al., 2025). This study breaks down the ArriveCAN app into the three principles and points out that the app’s infrastructure experienced glitches, it was meant to be efficient and low-cost, but ended up being very costly, and individuals received punishments and fines for breaking any rules (Mutlu et al., 2025).

Even though research about the border and the ArriveCAN app in relation to COVID-19 has been conducted in the criminological literature, there is a significant gap in this literature in relation to how the ArriveCAN app was used as a form of restriction on travellers at the Canadian borders, and how different agencies, like the government, CBSA, the Customs and Immigration Union, and the public, constructed/understood the app. Current research and literature have focused on the digitization and technologization of the border, but have not focused much attention on the ways in which the ArriveCAN app was a form of restriction or governance on the public during COVID-19; therefore, this study has been conducted to attempt to resolve the identified gap in the previous literature.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As will be explored further in the Methods section below, this study used content and discourse analyses to understand the uses of the ArriveCAN app in relation to the Canadian border. These analyses assigned meanings to the language surrounding the app and the border (Neuendorf, 2017). A grounded theory approach was used to delve deeper into the ArriveCAN app and its uses. This approach was used to explain a concept that has been previously examined (Creswell, 2007). The ArriveCAN app was invented and used while it was examined in different ways, and since it was already invented and in use, this is considered a theoretical underpinning (Creswell, 2007). As grounded theory suggests, anything that has been previously established is a theory (Creswell, 2007). This thesis seeks to add to this previously established theory by providing more detailed explanations for the uses of ArriveCAN.

ArriveCAN was being used at the borders and other ports of entry by the public. It was used to collect traveller information, and the government discourse surrounding this app was that it is a faster and easier way to present traveller information to officers at these ports of entry

(Wylie, 2022). There was a public outcry over the use of this app as it was mandatory and confusing for some people (Frowd et al., 2023). As the government was creating a discourse by framing this app in a positive light, the public was furious with the use of the app.

The concept of governmentality, which was posited by Foucault, was examined in relation to understanding discourses and constructions surrounding the ArriveCAN app. Governmentality, as described by Foucault (1991), focuses on three main aspects: security, population, and government. These notions come together to form the concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991). This concept of governmentality examines certain forces, authorities, and events and the ways in which these problematize people's conduct (Lalonde, 2012). It also examines how the government regulates an individual's specific actions or non-actions in order to achieve the government's specific ends or goals (Lalonde, 2012). Knowledge about the ideas of economy, society, morality, authority, and subjectivity that contribute to the problematizations of people's conduct leads to strategies of government (Rose, 1999, as cited in Lalonde, 2012). In this sense, people are governed by the government in different ways, and one of these ways is through the use of the ArriveCAN app.

Governmentality is based on two main notions, discipline and punishment (Foucault, 1977). Foucault (1977) states that discipline is diffused at the level of the population while punishment is at the individual level. In the past, there were sovereign governments which were archaic forms of government (Foucault, 1991). Within this type of government, a king ruled over the land and the population in order to reaffirm his power and status (the end of governance) (Foucault, 1991). He controlled all aspects of the population and land, and one of these aspects was making decisions for the land as well (Foucault, 1991). Punishment was the preferred mechanism of governance for the sovereign – any affront to his power and status was surely to

be met with swift punishment of his human subjects (i.e., imprisonment, torture, and even execution) as a brutal mechanism of reaffirming his sovereignty (Foucault, 1991).

In exploring punishment as a mode of governmentality, Foucault (1977) uses an example of a town that has been infected with a plague. This town with the plague has been locked down, and rules are established to prevent the circulation of the disease (Foucault, 1977). People are punished when they break the rules that have been set in place to control the plague in order to reinforce the power of the town to regulate its subjects (Foucault, 1977). In relation to COVID-19, this can readily be located in some of the close surveillance and punitive measures (i.e., fines, quarantines, etc.) that the government imposed on individuals during COVID-19. In relation to border security, non-residents of Canada who were unvaccinated or partially vaccinated were effectively banned entry into Canada due to the potential for the spread of the virus, and this was clearly used as a ‘punishment’ for people who did not acquire the COVID-19 vaccines (Government of Canada, 2022a). For those who tested positive for COVID-19 upon arrival (residents and non-residents), detention of 14 days in designated government hotels was employed as a punitive mechanism of restricting the mobility of infected persons and thus the spread of the disease (much like the plague-stricken town). In short, those who did not comply with the mandates of the Government of Canada were effectively punished by having their freedom of mobility suspended or removed completely.

As governments have existed for many years, the roles of these governments have changed. In more modern times, the government is completely different. There are elected governments with elected officials who govern the population and land in different ways. Initially, according to Foucault (1991), this was achieved through disciplinary models of governance, whereby the state could regulate the population through institutions of various kinds



(i.e., the church, education, healthcare, etc.). This was achieved by using technologies, or “tools,” to govern the population as a whole (moving beyond the “individual” as a unit of governance characteristic of punishment) (Foucault, 1991). Crime rates, health, education, poverty, etc., are all regulated by the government through technologies governing the population (Foucault, 1991). In the case of public health, for example, governments use programs, education, and discipline through food pyramids, Health Canada commercials, public health campaigns, etc., to direct people into focusing on these issues, and in turn, the behaviour of the population is regulated through these technologies (Lalonde, 2012). Governments try to maintain bandwidths of acceptable behaviour by using technologies to govern the population and keep measurements within an ‘acceptable’ range (Foucault, 1991).

As an example of discipline as a form of governmentality, Foucault (1977) introduces Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon. The Panopticon is an architectural building with a tower in the centre, and this tower has windows all around it (Foucault, 1977). A supervisor is placed in this tower and is able to view the rooms of the building (Foucault, 1977). However, occupants of the building outside of the tower cannot see into the tower. In this way, the tower ensures that the people in the rooms who are observable by the supervisor in the tower will therefore behave in a desired way due to the potential that the supervisor is (at any given time) watching them (without their knowledge). This ensures that their behaviour will be disciplined because of the notion that they are being watched. This architectural design was used in the past, for example, in prisons in order to regulate the behaviour of inmates.

Foucault (1978) describes the tension created by disciplinary and punishment-based forms of governance in the plague-stricken town when he further explores the problem of “circulation” within the town. Circulation is the flow of things, and this town required circulation

to continue its functions. This town must regularly have people flowing in and out, trading with other towns, and continue on with these functions in order to ensure that the town (and its people) survives (Foucault, 1978). This town and its circumstances create a duality because the town might need to lock down to prevent the spread of the plague, but in order for the town to survive, the town must remain functional. Discipline emerges as a way to govern a population and regulate behaviour while permitting circulation.

Foucault describes discipline, punishment, and circulation, and these relate to the COVID-19 restrictions both inland and at the border. This is because, initially, restrictions were very harsh, and circulation was largely stopped altogether. This included limiting movement inside Canada to “essential workers” and into/outside Canada to only “essential travel”, which few people qualified for in either case. This occurred as a way of social sorting, which is categorizing based on social or economic factors. People who were allowed to circulate or travel due to essentiality were considered exceptions from the norm, which was initially that people were generally not allowed to circulate or travel internationally. This showed that people with high social and economic status who were important to society and the economy received exemptions to ensure the continued basic functioning of the economy. But, as COVID-19 continued, a need to permit greater circulation emerged. This is because the Canadian economy (both inland and internationally) relies heavily on the movement of goods and people. As a result of this emergence, more disciplinary measures were introduced to permit circulation while still functioning to regulate the behaviour of individuals to limit the extent to which COVID-19-infected people were entering Canada.

For example, inland (away from the border), tools such as vaccine certificates and rules surrounding mandatory masking were used to reinforce uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations and

the wearing of masks by regulating access to public and private spaces of various kinds (i.e., restaurants, retail stores, sports and concert venues, etc.). In other words, in exchange for being allowed to gradually “enjoy the social world” and participate in the economy again (including working) as restrictions were being lifted, the population was being disciplined to get vaccinated, wear masks, and follow other mandates as required. This behaviour was made necessary because there was the notion that access to space was being constantly regulated and surveilled by various social actors, including government, health officials, business owners, bylaw enforcement, police officers, etc. These logics could also be directly seen at the border where residents and non-residents were disciplined to obtain vaccines, comply with wearing masks when transiting through airports and while on airplanes, and participate in “healthy” behaviour to avoid potential positive PCR tests, all in exchange for the ability to travel beyond international borders once again. Again, an entire surveillance apparatus in the form of border agencies like CBSA working alongside Health Canada was employed to make this behaviour compulsory on the part of populations wanting to travel. Disciplinary COVID-19 technologies were designed to attempt to achieve the end or goal of slowing down the spread of COVID-19 while maintaining an acceptable “bandwidth” of infections, deaths, etc.

While technologies of disciplinary and punishment-based governance were certainly working to regulate the behaviours of populations and individuals (as explored above) during COVID-19 restrictions, these governmentalities were decidedly inefficient and limited. In the case of borders, while travel restrictions included “essential travel only,” and gradually travel mandates reinforced “healthy” behaviour on the part of those wishing to travel internationally, they also functioned to slow circulation to a crawl. In borrowing from Foucault’s (1977, 1978) examination of the plague-stricken town and the problem of circulation, while disciplinary forms

of governance had permitted a “re-opening of the town,” the town’s borders were still, in effect, clogged up because of the necessity of enforcing the very mandates designed to permit circulation. Border officers had to initially check physical vaccine records and negative PCR tests while also ensuring travellers were “essential.” These disciplinary measures were cumbersome, slow, and only permitted circulation to occur at a glacial pace. A more expedient and diffuse form of governance would be required to truly open up circulation and reopen the economy to international travel and trade. Enter the ArriveCAN app.

As scholars have indicated in the past (Foucault, 1991; Lalonde, 2019; Cliffe, 2020; Frowd et al., 2023), modern tools of governance have shifted beyond disciplinary forms of regulation and have effectively abandoned institutions as a source of power over populations. There is an emergence of “control” as a new form of governance (Deleuze, 1992). This control, as described by Deleuze (1992), is freedom that is modulated through choices and behaviours. It leverages digital technology to regulate human subjects through their digital subjectivity located in databases (Lalonde, 2019). This digital subjectivity leads to the possibility that problems of circulation at the border, such as drug smuggling, can be regulated through data and risk information (Lalonde, 2019). The emergence of risk data as a technology of control promises that border officers can keep perpetrators (of various kinds) out of the country by gaining information about them in advance of their arrival (Lalonde, 2019). If someone’s digital subjectivity produced by a database betrays them as “risky,” they will be relegated to search, detention, and possibly denied entry. As these databases and technologies keep their focus on perpetrators, border officers can focus on detecting, intercepting, and rejecting entry to those who are not allowed entry into Canada. The coinciding promise is that those who are non-risky

will comparatively experience expedited clearance at the border, allowing for enhanced “good circulation” while focusing resources and enforcement on “bad circulation.”

The government, in effect, attempts to control the population not by regulating behaviour (discipline), but by making it “knowable” in databases and using this information to regulate access to social goods of various kinds (like international travel). Control can be linked to Foucault’s concept of bio-power, involving the abandonment of governing a population’s behaviour in favour instead of *managing* a population (Foucault, 1978). This is seen in the case of the ArriveCAN app and how the government, along with CBSA, tried to manage circulation (international travel and trade) through mandatory advanced collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data through the ArriveCAN app. In this way, anyone travelling across the Canadian border (residents and non-residents) was effectively coerced into using the ArriveCAN app as a way to make themselves “knowable,” share advanced vaccination and PCR test information, and produce a digitized subject in a database for border officers to examine as a way of permitting the effective *management* of international travel and trade and *easing* border restrictions (i.e., permitting more circulation). The promise created by the ArriveCAN app was effectively that “good circulation” (healthy, non-infected, vaccinated, ArriveCAN users) would experience expedited circulation through the border, whereas “bad circulation” (unhealthy, infected, unvaccinated, and/or non-ArriveCAN users) would experience the full force of the Government of Canada’s COVID-19 health surveillance and restrictions (including arrested or banned circulation through the border). Importantly, while disciplinary and punishment-based forms of governance still persisted (see notes above), the ArriveCAN app signalled a transition to a control-based form of governance centred on employing risk management through digitized

subjectivity to limit access to social goods as a mechanism of *managing* the problem of circulation through the border.

In addition, it is important to reinforce that ArriveCAN is an app that was a *digital* form of governance because it had control over the population, and regulated problems like mobility, by leveraging data and risk to target risky movement while effectively ignoring low-risk movement (Lalonde, 2019). Pre-emptive risk calculations based on the data of individuals as digitized subjects show that the boundary between what is “real” and corporeal and what is “fake” or simulated is increasingly being abandoned due to the digital measures that take place (Baudrillard, 1983). The line between real and fake becomes blurred when technology represents distortions of the real world (Baudrillard, 1983). As this line blurs, the data about humans within this technology (“digitized subjectivity”) begins to become more real than humans themselves (“human subjectivity”). This technology collects data from individuals to look at their risk scores and calculate the risk they may pose to the border and the country in general. As a result, the risk calculations and data that have been defined by technology are seen as more crucial (and credible) in regulating circulation than human narrative.

It is also important to note that these digital technologies are far-reaching. They collect, analyze, and interpret data about individuals, especially at the border. As these technologies are far-reaching, it is important to consider that border work goes further than the physical borders that exist (Lalonde, 2018). Border work occurs at these physical borders, but digital technologies allow the border to assess risks from afar instead of only at the physical borders (Lalonde, 2018). This assessment from afar allows CBSA and the government to control the circulation of goods and people. For example, as Miller and Rose (2008) suggest, these technologies allow the government to stay at a distance while still regulating people into and out of the country. More

specifically, if an individual from France, for example attempts to board a plane in France to fly to Canada, and CBSA knows that individual to be inadmissible to Canada, when their passport is scanned at the airline check-in desk in France, CBSA will inform the airline of this revelation and issue a “no-board” decision for that individual. As such, one can be denied entry to Canada digitally from overseas, never being allowed to arrive at the Canadian border or even interact with a border officer. Technologies reach far distances, and the government can now regulate people from afar as well as at the borders. One of the technologies that aid the government in this is ArriveCAN. This app allows CBSA to receive data about an individual from afar and before they arrive at the physical border. They then use this data to interpret and analyze risk before the traveller arrives at the border in order to ensure that they are allowed entry and do not pose a threat (in this case, to public health).

## **Methods**

The research questions that this thesis seeks to answer are: What were the uses of ArriveCAN during COVID-19? Does the app have intended purposes other than/beyond COVID-19 purposes? If so, what were these purposes? The subquestions that will add to these questions are: How was/is ArriveCAN being used as a digitized border security measure? How did/does the app function as a form of health/mobility governance in relation to border security? Was the app being used to regulate the migration of travellers through public health? How do these additional uses function to regulate the migration of travellers? Why is the app still being used after the end of COVID-19? How do official government discourses surrounding ArriveCAN compare with those using the application (travellers, migrants, border officers, etc.)?

The following methods were used to respond to the questions listed above. A content analysis was used to glean information from various documents, such as newspaper articles,

parliamentary committee hearing minutes, the House of Commons Hansard, public information, and CBSA Union comments. Using qualitative research to explore the use of ArriveCAN during COVID-19, especially its intended uses, was best for examining the app because the descriptive data allowed for a deeper understanding of the data that was explored. Along with content analysis, a discourse analysis was additionally conducted. Within data that is qualitative, these analyses seek to provide meanings and relationships to words, concepts, and themes that are present within the data (Neuendorf, 2017). These meanings and relationships that are gleaned from the data allow for a better understanding of the language, power relationships, social hierarchies, and more within the words, concepts, and themes that are provided within the data (Neuendorf, 2017). Assigning meaning and uncovering themes within this data allowed for a fuller understanding of the meanings, power relationships, and constructions used in relation to the ArriveCAN app.

The research site, or sources in this case, included newspaper articles, parliamentary committee hearing testimony, the House of Commons Hansard, public information, and CBSA Union comments. These sources were used to collect data and information about the app and formed the most thorough examination of the ArriveCAN app to date. The dates for collecting this data from newspaper articles ranged from August 2021 to August 2023 to gain knowledge about the uses of this application just prior to the beginning of its use through to the end of COVID-19 restrictions. This date range allowed for data to be collected for the duration that the application was used, and it ensured that all of the data related to ArriveCAN and its uses was collected. In addition to the dates, well-known newspaper publications were included in the inclusion criteria to form a manageable sample, such as Vancouver Sun, National Post, Globe and Mail, and more. The search prompt for this criteria ensured the inclusion of ArriveCAN,



COVID-19, and the Canadian border, and as such, the prompt was “ArriveCAN and COVID-19 and the Canadian border/CBSA.” This criteria included many details, but it also excluded certain details to make sure that only data related to the criteria was shown. So, the criteria excluded duplicates of newspaper articles from different publications. From this criteria, the sample size ended up being 200 newspaper articles. After 200 articles, data saturation was reached because the articles were no longer revealing new information.

The sampling strategy that was used was purposive sampling because specific information was required about the ArriveCAN app, making random sampling inappropriate for the study (Neuendorf, 2017). Similarly, newspaper articles were selected carefully based on a limited date range and to exclusively locate and analyze articles that state the uses of ArriveCAN specifically.

The approach to data collection was to collect the information and data about ArriveCAN from the sources, analyze and code the data in relation to the research questions, and generate findings in relation to discourses and how the application is “constructed” by the various social actors mentioned previously. Open coding, which is the process of breaking down, examining, and comparing data for similarities and differences, was used (Strauss & Corbin, 2004, as cited in Lalonde, 2019). After conducting open coding, axial coding was conducted to organize the most important codes from open coding into broader categories (Creswell, 2007). The final step to coding, which is selective coding, then took place. This allowed the broader categories of codes to be narrowed down into one core category, which aligns with the research questions (Creswell, 2007).

A manual method of coding the data was used as opposed to using qualitative software; therefore, a Word document was used to list codes and discourses emerging from the data, along

with each quotation from documents that served to illustrate each point. The advantages of the method for this study were that information was gained about the app, and it ensured that data was not missed while collecting it by following all of these steps. However, the disadvantages were that content analysis was time-consuming, and it did not allow for direct personal accounts of people using the application. This was because information from articles was examined instead of interviewing people to get their personal opinions on the app. However, given that some time has passed since the app was mandatory, it is possible people would not have a clear memory of using ArriveCAN anymore. This is where historical records like newspaper articles and parliamentary testimony can be used to provide historical perspectives of people using the application while COVID-19 restrictions were still ongoing. Additionally, given that the app is no longer mandatory to use, it would be difficult to track down actual users of ArriveCAN in 2025 for the purpose of an interview. In short, qualitative interviews were not particularly feasible and would not have vastly improved the research design of this study.

Also, in this study, triangulation took place. This is the use of a variety of methods or data sources to attain an understanding of the research questions (Neuendorf, 2017). In this study, triangulation occurred by contrasting what was found in newspaper reporting, parliamentary testimony, and other public information, with what was seen in government official discourses in relation to the app. Combining the newspaper articles and public information was stronger than using newspaper articles or public information alone. It was anticipated that common themes would emerge from multiple sources that were being examined, allowing for some confidence in the results that were being gleaned from the data.

## Reflexivity

Access to Information and Privacy (hereafter, ATIP) requests are beneficial for data production (Walby & Larson, 2011). They allow “citizens, organizations, and permanent residents in several countries across the globe [to] request unpublished information from federal, provincial, state, county, and municipal government agencies” (Walby & Larson, 2011, p. 31). These requests follow that “the premise (or promise) of [ATIP] law is that citizens can request information that has not previously been made a matter of the public record and that requests of this kind facilitate information access in a participatory and democratic manner and reinforce government accountability” (Walby & Larson, 2011, p. 31). From this, it can be seen that ATIP requests are made available to the public for records that have not been publicly released.

The researcher filed an ATIP request with the CBSA on August 22, 2024. It read the following:

Seeking all records (including, but not limited to, emails sent or received, reports authored or received, presentations, memoranda, RFPs, etc.) related to intended, potential, or real uses of the ArriveCAN digital application (or any other similar digital application for use in the traveller processing stream) beyond the application's COVID-19 reporting uses during pandemic border restrictions. In other words, seeking documents related to non-COVID-19 and/or public health uses, enhancements, or adaptations of the ArriveCAN application (real or imagined). Documents sought should range from August 2021 until August 2024.

There was a 30-day time limit for CBSA to process the request, but a 90-day extension was requested by the CBSA team for this request.

The next contact by the CBSA in relation to the ATIP request was October 1, 2024, and they were unable to process the request because they required additional information. From this, a phone call between the CBSA and the researcher took place, which resulted in the researcher

agreeing to remove portions of the request, such as emails, in order to process the request and get the information quicker. Since some portions were removed, the new request read the following:

Seeking all records (including, but not limited to, reports authored or received, presentations, memoranda, RFPs, etc) related to intended, potential, or real uses of the ArriveCan digital application (or any other similar digital application for use in the traveller processing stream) beyond the application's COVID-19 reporting uses during pandemic border restrictions. In other words, seeking documents OTHER THAN any COVID-19 or public health uses, enhancements, or adaptations of the ArriveCan application. For sake of narrowing scope, please omit all emails and any documentation regarding contracting.

This new wording led to a decreased amount of data, but it would be processed and received quickly. Unfortunately, on October 29, 2024, the CBSA contacted the researcher to narrow the request down and change the wording once again. After going back and forth several times, the wording was shaved down to only include final documents and omit drafts due to the abundance of records that pertained to the ATIP request.

On January 16, 2025, another phone call between the CBSA and the researcher took place, which led to the wording being shaved down even further. The new wording of the ATIP request was the following:

Seeking records (including, but not limited to, reports authored or received, presentations, memoranda) related to the intended, potential, or real uses of the ArriveCan digital application (or any other similar digital application for use in the traveller processing stream. This would be pertaining to ADVANCED DECLARATION FOR CUSTOMS AND/OR IMMIGRATION PURPOSES. Please exclude any documents on COVID-19 or public health uses of the ArriveCan application. We require records pertaining to the business and theory aspect of the application. Please omit all records pertaining to the design or IT side. Please provide records on the processing of travellers at the border and exclude records pertaining to the commercial and trade business line. Please provide records in their final state and exclude all drafts. Please omit ALL emails. Please omit records regarding contracting.

This new wording was very different from the original wording, but in the hopes of receiving the documents quicker, it was accepted, with the exception of the date range still applying to the request. After this new wording was conveyed to the researcher, there have not been any updates with the ATIP request.

This ATIP request has not been processed. Even though the wording of the request was changed multiple times, and multiple extensions were requested by the CBSA to process this request, the documents were not received. The lack of these documents led to a lack of data and triangulation for this research because the lack of data from the ATIP request may have hindered the researcher's access to diverse information about ArriveCAN that is not publicly available. Additionally, as Walby & Larson (2011) pointed out, dirty data may have been a factor in this request (as cited in Marx, 1984). Walby & Larson (2011) noted that,

Marx describes dirty data as texts that are submerged by governmental agencies since the information therein would be discrediting to the agencies in question. We extend this approach to dirty data with a focus on [ATIP] requests as a means of accessing texts that could be discrediting or controversial if made a matter of the public record (as cited in Marx, 1984).

As stated in the quotation above, dirty data may have been uncovered in relation to the request that was filed to the CBSA ATIP team, and this data may have been controversial.

Another factor that may have been involved in the delay/failure to process the request could be because of stonewalling (Walby & Larson, 2011). Stonewalling involves techniques such as amber lighting and red filing (Walby & Larson, 2011). As Walby & Larson (2011) explain,

Amber lighting refers to the tagging of a request or a requester as politically contentious. Red filing refers to requests that are stonewalled either by the

Minister or by the Prime Minister's Office... who receive a weekly inventory of tagged requests.

As the quotation points out, amber lighting is a technique used when a request is seen as controversial or contains information that could be controversial for the organization that the request was made for; in this case, it was the CBSA. Red filing is a technique used when a request contains sensitive data that may impact the organization heavily, and this is sent to the Minister or the Prime Minister's Office due to the sensitivity. This lack of documents from the ATIP request can lead to a lack of data, but also an added level of reflexivity. This is because the researcher may question the missing data more deeply and the reasons why it is missing. Could it be because the CBSA was hiding 'dirty data', or because they were stonewalling by using techniques such as amber lighting and red filing?

## **Findings**

The findings that follow highlight the results of discourses gleaned from newspaper articles, parliamentary committee hearing testimony, the House of Commons Hansard, public information, and CBSA Union comments. From the sources that were analyzed and discourses generated in relation to the ArriveCAN app, four key themes emerged related to constructions surrounding the application. These four key themes included: 1) Cost, 2) App Usage, 3) Public Privacy, and 4) 'Scrap the App'.

### **Cost**

From analyzing the sources, the most common theme was the cost of the ArriveCAN app. The actual cost of the app was viewed as an absurd amount and a waste of time and money (Curry, 2022a). Several sources have confirmed that "total federal spending on the ArriveCan app is on pace to reach in excess of \$54-million this year – more than double what the

government recently said has been spent to date” (Curry, 2022a). The amount of money that was spent on the app was seen as needless. A Conservative MP stated that “this is an absolute waste of taxpayers’ money, with absolutely no oversight, no accountability, and no sense of caring from the government that this money could have been better used elsewhere” (Curry & Singh 2022). As this source, and many other sources have pointed out, the cost of the app was extreme, and the government did not seem to take accountability for the overspending.

The government engaged several companies for the creation of the ArriveCAN app, with GC Strategies receiving the largest payment and being mentioned the most in relation to the app. This company is based in Ottawa and is a two-person firm (Toronto Star, 2023). As Hopper (2022a) stated:

The federal government managed to outsource the app's development to no less than 23 separate companies, eight of which raked in commissions of more than \$1 million. The largest single beneficiary was GC Strategies, a company headquartered in a rural Ottawa house that appears to specialize largely in federal tech contracts.

As this quotation suggests, GC Strategies was the main company that headed the responsibilities for the creation of the app. But, even though GC Strategies has been paid millions of dollars for the app, they did not actually create the app (Toronto Star, 2023). This company subcontracted other companies to create and maintain the app, while GC Strategies kept fifteen to thirty percent in commission (Toronto Star, 2023). Initially, the government had indicated that five companies worked on this app, but it turned out to be twenty-seven companies that worked on it (Curry, 2023). This led to more criticism because the government was not transparent about the number of companies that worked on the app, and the more companies that worked on it, the more money needed to be spent to accommodate these companies for their work and time.

GC Strategies was “approached to provide a team for consideration to fulfil certain ArriveCan requirements” (Toronto Star, 2023). As this statement suggests, this company only provided the government with other companies that could help in the creation of the app, but GC Strategies did not do anything further than that. This led to a problem of why the government did not hire companies directly, and why the work on the app was not done in-house and instead was outsourced (Toronto Star, 2023). Since GC Strategies subcontracted other companies to do work, they outsourced these companies instead of doing the work ‘in-house’ (Toronto Star, 2023). Several sources have indicated that tech companies and the public did not understand the need to outsource, and:

[Nick Van Weerdenburg, CEO and founder of Toronto-based Rangle said] that it is “completely unacceptable” that the government turned to a company that primarily outsourced the work to subcontractors. He said there are about 100 Canadian tech companies that probably could have built the app directly for much less. John Ruffolo, founder and managing partner at Maverix Private Equity and co-founder of the Council of Canadian Innovators, said Ottawa should do more to support Canada’s tech sector through procurement. Yet when a Canadian company is hired that relies primarily on unidentified subcontractors, there’s no assurance the work stays in Canada (Curry, 2022d).

The quotation above suggests that the government handed the contract of ArriveCAN to GC Strategies, which subsequently outsourced and turned to companies outside of its own to develop the app. In this way, the public stated that the government could have saved money for the creation of the app because GC Strategies subcontracted other companies instead of developing the app on their own, and this costs an abundance of money because GC Strategies, as well as all of the companies that were subcontracted were paid for their parts in the development of the app.

GC Strategies collected a lot of money from the government for providing companies that could create the ArriveCAN app. Several sources indicated that this company has collected



\$44 million from federal work that has occurred within twenty departments over the span of two years (Curry, 2023). Many people have voiced their concerns about this company and the abundant amount of money they took for the app by saying: “what were these people thinking? When I worked in the private sector, if I had suggested taking such a big cut simply for acting as an intermediary, I would not have kept my job for very long” (Curry, 2022b). This suggests that even though GC Strategies was merely the “middleman” for this app, did not build the app, and only provided the government with other companies who could build the app, they received the largest payment.

As the cost of the app was steep, many sources revealed that the public thought that “the \$54 million was clearly misspent” (Lau, 2022). Many sources indicated that the cost may have been more than \$54 million because the government was not transparent about the costs, and the cost of the public sector is more than the cost of the government (Lau, 2022). As Lau (2022) stated:

... unfortunately, even this price tag does not fully account for the cost of the app. The distortionary effect of the taxes that finance government spending means that every dollar collected by the federal government costs the private sector more than a dollar. The cost of raising an additional dollar in tax revenues is known as the marginal cost of public funds. A study done this year by Alberta economists Bev Dahlby and Ergete Ferede put it at \$2.02 to raise \$1 via the federal corporate tax and \$2.86 to raise \$1 via the federal personal income tax. The dollar cost to Canadians of developing the app is therefore something like two to three times the stated amount of \$54 million.

As stated in the quotation above, the actual cost of the app may have been more than the \$54 million that the government has quoted for the money spent on the app. This suggests that “the rule of thumb in economics is that government spends twice as much as private entities in a competitive environment would need to spend to accomplish the same thing” (Lau, 2022). This

means that the government overspends, costing it twice the amount of money it should to accomplish any task.

As the government did not keep transparency with the public about the cost of the app, the public was furious. The government overspent on the app without notifying the public of the specifics of the costs of this app (Curry, 2022b). That being said, “NDP MP Taylor Bachrach said the biggest concern is the lack of transparency when it comes to how the app’s cost grew from an initial \$80,000 to \$54 million” (Curry, 2022b). This lack of transparency on the part of the government led to much confusion and angst among the public. The government diverted when discussing the costs of the app due to the amount that was spent. After some deliberation and an investigation into the costs of the app, Rakowski (2022) stated that:

The Globe and Mail reported a breakdown of the \$54 million cost as: software updates \$8.8 million, Service Canada call-centre time \$7.5 million, data management \$5.2 million, cloud hosting, technical support and IT services \$13.6 million and indirect costs such as benefits and accommodation \$4.9 million.

This quotation above brings to light the actual costs of the app and provides the public with information about where and how \$54 million was spent on the app.

Even though this breakdown has been provided, it is not as accurate as it seemed. This is because an investigation into the app and its costs was conducted by the Auditor General, Karen Hogan. The Auditor General stated:

Most concerning was that the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, did not have complete and accurate financial records. Because of this, we were unable to calculate the exact cost of the ArriveCAN application. By piecing together the little information available, we estimated that ArriveCAN cost approximately \$59.5 million (House of Commons Canada, 2024a, p. 1).

As stated in the quotation above, the CBSA did not partake in proper financial record-keeping for the costs of the ArriveCAN app. This adds to the lack of transparency about the costs of the app, and shows that the organization that was responsible for the app did not handle the app responsibly or “by the book.”

In addition to the lack of responsibility on the part of the government and CBSA for the app, the Auditor General in the House of Commons also stated that:

We didn't find records to accurately show how much was spent on what, who did the work, or how and why contracting decisions were made. That paper trail should have existed. Overall, the audit shows a glaring disregard for basic management and contracting practices throughout ArriveCAN's development and implementation (House of Commons Canada, 2024a, p. 1).

As stated in the quotation above, there were few records about the app and everything related to it, which shows disregard for transparency and proper management related to the app. As the Auditor General in the House of Commons pointed out:

Government organizations needed to be flexible and fast in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they still needed to document their decisions and demonstrate the prudent use of public funds. In this audit, we found serious failures and omissions everywhere we looked (House of Commons Canada, 2024a, p. 1).

As stated above, keeping records of important information is crucial, especially for things that impact the public on a large scale. Taxpayer money was used for this app, and there should have been proper documentation of how and where that money was spent, but unfortunately, there was not (House of Commons Canada, 2024a). In this way, the government and CBSA failed to be transparent and manage the app and its costs effectively and clearly.

As the government and CBSA were responsible for the development of the app, the costs of the app were questioned within the House of Commons (House of Commons Canada, 2024b).

Mr. Fraser Tolmie, an MP, asked Ms. Jennifer O’Connell, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, about the costs of the app:

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: With regard to the ArriveCAN application: (a) does the government have a plan to recoup the inappropriate payments made in relation to the development or implementation of ArriveCAN, and, if so, what is it; and (b) how much money has the government recouped to date related to ArriveCAN, in total and broken down by individual or vendor that received money?

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the CBSA is currently reviewing all invoices submitted by GC Strategies, Coradix Technology Consulting and Dalian Enterprises Inc. to determine whether any overpayments were issued, and sharing all relevant information with Public Services and Procurement Canada, PSPC, for its own reviews. If inappropriate payments to these three companies are found as a result of the review, the CBSA will use any mechanisms available to recoup the funds, including through litigation or criminal prosecution, if necessary. In addition, any potential wrong doing from public servants will be referred for further investigation (House of Commons Canada, 2024b).

As mentioned above, the costs of the app were brought up in the House of Commons, and even though the public and the Conservative Party think the government overspent on the app, the government continued to be oblivious to this opinion. Additionally, as the Auditor General pointed out, accurate financial records and records of the companies that worked on the app were not kept, which made it difficult for the CBSA and government to provide accurate accounting related to the costs of the app (House of Commons Canada, 2024a). Without accurate records, the public cannot and will not be reimbursed for the money that was overspent on the app. Other companies have come forward and said that they could have built the app much faster and cheaper than the government.

Not only did the government overspend on the ArriveCAN app, but the app was also recreated by a company called Lazer Technologies (Toronto Star, 2022a). This company was

astonished at the cost of the ArriveCAN app and decided to figure out if they could build the app faster and cheaper than the government (Toronto Star, 2022a). They held hackathons over a weekend during which the app was recreated (Curry, 2022c) and as it turns out,

They managed to replicate it over a single weekend. Despite their speedy duplication, Manji [co-founder of Lazer Technologies] said he still has empathy for the complexity of the task and all the processes that were underway behind the scenes to ensure the application was safe and secure for a country as large as Canada. But not \$54 million worth of empathy (Toronto Star, 2022a).

As stated in the quotation above, this app was easily replicated within one weekend, and it did not cost this company nearly as much money as it did for the companies hired by the government to create the app. Manji states that his company had a blueprint to work from for recreating the app, and acknowledges that the companies that created ArriveCAN needed to start from the bottom and work their way up, but he still thought that the government did not consider companies that would perform this work faster and cheaper (Toronto Star, 2022a). As has been noted, Lazer Technologies was able to recreate this app way faster and cheaper than the companies hired by the government, yet the government was not able to control the costs of the app or the time it took to build it.

This app was expensive and was built from taxpayer money. As noted above, several sources have indicated that the government overspent on the app, and Manji points out that “having built over 100 different apps at Lazer for some of the most exciting companies in the world, it was shocking for us to see the total amount of capital that was spent to design, create, launch and maintain the ArriveCan app” (Curry, 2022c). As Manji and several other sources have pointed out, even though there is acknowledgment that the government was under pressure to control COVID-19 during the pandemic, overspending on an app that was deemed ‘useless’ was very shocking (Curry, 2022c).

The cost of the app was immense, and the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included the use of the ArriveCAN app, impacted many different aspects of communities as well. The tourism industry is one of the industries that was heavily impacted during the pandemic. Many businesses that take part in contributing to the tourism industry in their communities were hit hard. This is because tourists who came from the United States of America during COVID-19 were largely unaware of the app's existence (Toronto Star, 2022b). Due to this unawareness of the app, tourists who were coming from the U.S. experienced hours-long delays (Toronto Star, 2022b). Due to the abundance of restrictions, especially the ArriveCAN app and its chaos, tourists stopped visiting Canada, which impacted the tourism industry and businesses at a time when communities relied on tourism for finances (Toronto Star, 2022b).

An example of the tourism industry and businesses struggling during the pandemic due to the app and restrictions is that:

Niagara Falls is the number one leisure tourism destination in all of Canada, Conservative MP Tony Baldinelli, who represents the region, told the Star. We've lost two tourism years ... We need to save the 2022 tourism season and ArriveCAN is threatening to deny that ability for us to recover. There are four border crossings in Baldinelli's riding, including the Rainbow International Bridge, which the MP said posted two-and-a-half-hour wait times over the Memorial Day weekend in May. The timing is worrisome, he said, because Niagara generates 75 per cent of its income during the summer months (Toronto Star, 2022b).

As stated in the above quotation, many businesses that rely on tourism for income struggled during the pandemic due to the restrictions and the ArriveCAN app that were put in place. These restrictions and the unawareness of the app decreased and deterred tourists from entering and visiting Canada due to the chaos, including long wait times, that occurred because of the restrictions and the app.

Tourists who were visiting Canada from the U.S. and were not aware of the app were struggling once they arrived at the border to cross into Canada. The mayor of Niagara Falls pointed out that instead of allocating money for the maintenance and update of the ArriveCAN app, that money should be allocated to communities and businesses which rely on tourism for income, such as Niagara Falls (Toronto Star, 2022b). Tourism communities were losing money from the lack of tourism due to the app and restrictions, yet the ArriveCAN app received an abundance of money during this time (Toronto Star, 2022b). As several sources have indicated, the money that was wasted on the app could have been put to better use, and one of those uses could have been for the income of businesses that rely on tourism for income (Toronto Star, 2022b). The mayor pointed out that:

Americans are showing up in their minivan with their family at the border. No knowledge of the ArriveCAN app. They don't have roaming. They can't download the app. There's a lot of lineups of cars behind them. They can't get into the country (Toronto Star, 2022b).

This statement made by the mayor of Niagara Falls highlights the fact that the app brought up immense difficulties for people who were trying to visit Canada. Not only were people confused by the app, but they were stuck with hassles, such as delays and line-ups, and were eventually turned back because they could not/did not download the app for their vaccination information.

Tourism was heavily impacted during the pandemic, and so was trade. During the pandemic, for a long time, trade and travel were not allowed at all, but eventually, once the pandemic and virus slowed, essential trade and travel were allowed (The Globe and Mail, 2021). As the app and restrictions were impacting tourism, trade, travel, and businesses, they were also impacting the economy at a larger level. This is because the impacts on these separate industries caused a loss of income for all of the industries. The restrictions and the app were impacting all

of these industries and led to a point where the economy itself was struggling as well (Toronto Star, 2021). People stopped visiting Canada, only essential trade and travel were allowed, businesses were impacted due to the loss of tourists in tourist communities, and as a whole, the economy was impacted due to the lack of income for all of these industries (Toronto Star, 2022b). As Foucault pointed out, the economy continues when circulation occurs, but without circulation, economic continuation becomes difficult (Foucault, 1978). Economic recovery was a big goal for these industries once the pandemic, restrictions, and the app were no longer mandatory due to the lack of income that came with COVID-19 (Toronto Star, 2021).

Not only was the actual cost of the app brought up several times in several sources, but the cost to the public due to the app was seen as crucial in relation to the costs of the app as well. The cost to the public due to the app was seen as inconveniences and chaos at the borders and airports due to the app. Many factors led to this chaos and inconveniences at the cost of the public due to inefficiencies that came with the app. Hassles at ports of entry were one of the biggest factors that led to chaos (Lau, 2022). The app itself and the requirements of the app

... unnecessarily hassled Canadians travelling in and out of the country, discouraged tourism, caused significant delays and sometimes chaos at border crossings, gave some travellers erroneous instructions to quarantine and otherwise caused widespread consternation (Lau, 2022).

As suggested by the quotation above, ArriveCAN caused an abundance of hassles at ports of entry. These hassles also included glitches that sent erroneous messages to travellers to quarantine, even though they did not need to (Toronto Star, 2022c). These messages would force travellers to quarantine when they did not need to due to a glitch in the application; for example, many sources have pointed out that "... due to a glitch, ArriveCAN instructed about 10,200 travellers to quarantine for fourteen days when they didn't have to" (Toronto Star, 2022c). As



this statement suggests, people were coerced to quarantine for fourteen days due to an erroneous message sent by the app. After this glitch sent out the erroneous message to the public, “outrageously, it took the government a full 12 days to notify those affected that they didn't need to quarantine after all” (Maddeaux, 2022). The quarantine order was almost done by the time the government was able to resolve the glitch in the app.

The hassles related to this app have resulted in the public referring to it as “annoying” and “cumbersome” (Maddeaux, 2022). Many sources have pointed out that the public finds the app difficult to use and figure out, and have “failed to enter the information properly because the app is confusing and unreliable” (Wilhelm, 2021). In addition, one particular group of people who struggled the most with the use of this app was senior citizens (Toronto Star, 2022d). During this time, many seniors were those “... who [didn’t] have a mobile device... [and] the app [was] just another way advocates say seniors are being left behind in an increasingly digital world” (Toronto Star, 2022d). Many seniors in several sources highlighted their concerns about the difficulty of the app and said:

“Basically, we're restricted," said Lipovenko, 69, noting that as long as ArriveCAN remains mandatory, she'll have to limit the length of her trips, or buy a cellphone just to travel. "I don't relish the prospect of suddenly realizing my opportunities to travel are limited this way because I simply don't have a certain technology. “What happens if this becomes permanent? Will we have to buy a service that we neither want nor use in order to be able to have the most basic travel outside the U.S.?" she said. "What about people who are pensioners on fixed incomes ... do they need this added expense at this particular point in time, especially with inflation?" (Toronto Star, 2022d).

The quotation above highlights the concerns of seniors in relation to the ArriveCAN app during the pandemic. They were unaware of how to use the app, found it difficult and confusing to use, and some of them had to buy a mobile device for the sole purpose of downloading the app to use it. Not only this, but a Conservative MP stated to the House of Commons that the app

is so difficult that some seniors are having to cancel trips to funerals, weddings and the birth of grandchildren. They are facing massive fines and mandatory quarantine, all because of a government app (Toronto Star, 2022d).

This app was fairly difficult to use for the public, especially for seniors. They were forced to cancel their travel plans due to the difficulty they faced with the app. As this app was deemed a waste, it was also seen as ‘ageist’ and discriminatory against seniors due to senior citizens struggling with the use of the app (Toronto Star, 2022d).

The public, especially senior citizens, found the app to be a hassle. Not only did it have glitches and send erroneous messages, was considered annoying and ageist, but it also led to delays at ports of entry (Tumilty, 2022a). As Tumilty (2022a) stated:

The number of delayed and cancelled flights has skyrocketed in recent weeks, especially for those travelling through Toronto's Pearson International. Planes have been held on the tarmac at Pearson because the customs hall could not accept more passengers and people have reported hours-long waits.

This quotation highlights the long lineups and delays that were at ports of entry due to the ArriveCAN app. It took officers time to look through a traveller's app in order to ensure that they were fully vaccinated and had the proper documentation before taking flight or crossing the border (Tumilty, 2022a). This resulted in long lines and delays of several flights, as well as missed flights when these lineups and delays took too long, which, in turn, was a hassle for the public. Ports of entry began to experience bottlenecks due to these delays and cancellations, and this led these ports to hire more security screeners to ease the chaos and bottlenecks at these entries (Tumilty, 2022a). More personnel were hired to ensure the decrease of bottlenecks at ports of entry, but the ArriveCAN app and the process to travel were not eased or made easier during this time.

The public had to encounter many hassles in relation to the ArriveCAN app, and CBSA officers were congruent with the public about the hassles of the app. Brown-John (2022) stated that:

Apparently, even members of Canada's Border Service Agency consider the ArriveCAN App to be of little practical value considering the time it often takes officers to assist those seeking to use the app to complete things correctly.

As the above quotation highlights, officers were wasting time helping the public fill out the requirements of the app correctly (Brown-John, 2022). This led to a cost and inconvenience for the public and officers due to the hassles that resulted from this, as well as the officer time wasted on helping the public with the app.

The costs of the app (actual and inconvenience) were immense, and this theme of cost contributes to the discourses surrounding the app between the government and the public. This is because the government continued the use of the app, even though the public, and many other agencies, repeatedly stated their concerns about the app. The \$54 million cost of the ArriveCAN app was absurd and was seen as a waste of time and money by the public. The public believed that the money could have been better spent elsewhere, yet the government decided to spend it on a 'useless' app (Curry, 2022c). GC Strategies was the company that the government contracted to build the app, yet they were not the ones who built it because they subcontracted other companies to develop the app (Toronto Star, 2023). This company took a large sum of money for being the intermediary in the creation of the app (Curry, 2023). Transparency was not conveyed by the government either because they were not transparent about the costs of the app, the companies that developed it, the records for the app, and more. This app was recreated quicker and cheaper by a different tech company, yet the government still continues to defend the costs of the app. Many aspects of communities and everyday life were impacted by the

restrictions and the app, because tourism, travel, businesses, and trade were all negatively impacted by the pointless app and restrictions. Due to the negative impact that the app had on these industries, the economy as a whole was hit hard as well. Not only did the app and restrictions impact these aspects of life, but they were also a cost to the public due to the inconveniences of the app and restrictions. Hassles, such as delays, line-ups, bottlenecks, and flight cancellations, were heavily inconvenient for the public and, as such, were a cost to the public. Despite all of these concerns by the public and other agencies, the government continued the use of app, and continued to defend it, which demonstrates a diversion in the discourses surrounding the app between government, on the one hand, and the public and other agencies on the other.

### **App Usage**

The second theme that resulted from analyzing the sources was app usage. This theme highlighted what ArriveCAN was made and used for. In the beginning, ArriveCAN was mandatory for all travellers to fill out their information (Toronto Star, 2022e). This information included travellers' health information, personal information, travel information, proof of vaccination, types of doses, dates of doses, and where a traveller plans on staying if they were required to quarantine (Toronto Star, 2022e). Without completing the requirements in the app, travellers were not allowed to cross a border or board an airplane, which made it mandatory for travellers to use this app to travel (Toronto Star, 2022e). The public was furious with the use of this app due to the chaos and inconvenience that it caused, but the government maintained the mandatory use of the app for all travellers, despite the public's clear disapproval of the app. In addition, the mandatory use of the app is also related to the concept of 'control' by Deleuze (1992). This concept shows how human subjectivity is found in digital technology and how this

subjectivity within this technology can notify its users (Deleuze, 1992). Since the app was mandatory and travellers were entering their information into the app, the app (as a digital technology) located the human subjectivity within it and notified officers of any warnings relating to the traveller and their information.

As the mandatory use of the app for travel became cumbersome for travellers and the spread of COVID-19 slowed, the use of the ArriveCAN app became voluntary (Toronto Star, 2022f). Several sources have pointed out that:

Dr. Zain Chagla of McMaster University was one of four specialists who analyzed the medical literature, compared Canada's response with other countries, and concluded "the restrictions introduced during the Omicron wave were largely ineffective and should not be maintained or reintroduced." In a report for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Association released Friday, they said "what made sense at the beginning of the pandemic, no longer makes sense today"... At best, their report said, travel restrictions only ever delayed the arrival of new variants of concern by a few days, and testing had resulted in "many false negatives and positives, caused significant economic and mental hardship, and has not been proven to prevent the virus and variants globally (Toronto Star, 2022f).

As the quotation above points out, ArriveCAN was no longer needed for travellers and their information, and due to the reasons pointed out, the app has become a voluntary option for travellers. The Edmonton Sun (2022) pointed out that:

The release, from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), says that "to modernize and expedite the travel experience, the CBSA is now providing travellers the option to submit their customs and immigration declaration up to 72 hours in advance of their arrival in Canada through ArriveCAN." They claim this will see "travellers spend less time at primary inspection kiosks (PIK) or eGates when they arrive at the airport, resulting in shorter lineups in arrivals halls."

This meant that travellers were still able to use the app for advanced customs and immigration declarations, but it was no longer mandatory to use the app to submit their travel and health information.

Even though the government changed the mandatory requirement of using the ArriveCAN app for travel to a voluntary option, many times, tools and technologies that are introduced as temporary by the government tend to become permanent. For example:

CTV News recently reported that the federal government intends to make the ArriveCan app permanent. According to senior government sources, the app collects lots of valuable information and the government wants to keep using it. We shouldn't be surprised by this since the natural tendency of any government is to make temporary measures permanent. After all, income tax was initially introduced as a temporary measure. That was 105 years ago (Zwaagstra, 2022).

This quotation suggests that the government intended to make the ArriveCAN app a permanent measure, even though it was introduced as a temporary public health measure during the pandemic.

Even though the app has become a voluntary option, the possibility of the app becoming permanent aggravated the public and they continued to state that “this isn't the direction to go. We need fewer hoops to jump through at the airport and at borders, not more” (The Edmonton Sun, 2022). As the government was trying to make this app permanent, the public realized “how out of touch the Trudeau government is with communities across the country,” and this showed the negligence of the government towards the public (The Winnipeg Sun, 2022). The public had clearly and abundantly shown their hatred for the app, yet the government decided to try to make it a permanent measure at ports of entry (The Winnipeg Sun, 2022).

As the government tried to make the ArriveCAN app permanent, the Public Safety Minister, Marco Mendicino, pointed out the initial reason for the creation of the app, as well as

how it could be used in a beneficial way for the future (The Winnipeg Sun, 2022). Mendicino stated, “ArriveCAN was originally created for COVID-19, but it has technological capacity beyond that, to shrink the amount of time that's required when you're getting screened at the border” (The Winnipeg Sun, 2022). This shows that the app was created due to COVID-19 and was a mandatory measure, which then became voluntary, and it has the capacity to go beyond the tasks for which it was created. This highlights the fact that several sources have pointed out that ArriveCAN is/was being used as a way to digitize the border (Toronto Star, 2022f). As pointed out by the Toronto Star (2022f):

ArriveCan has morphed into a digitized border arrival tool, and now people flying into certain airports can use it to fill out their customs and immigration form instead of the paper version. Boissonnault, [Tourism Minister], said that is in keeping with the digitization of border forms... and long term will make for faster, smoother border experiences. “If we're going to want to go from 22 million visitors in 2019, to something closer to 30 million by 2030, we're going to have to have a digital border,” he said.

The quotation above points out that ArriveCAN is/was used as a tool to digitize the border. The digitization and technologization of the border have been occurring for several years now (Lalonde, 2019), and the ArriveCAN app has added to this digitization of the border. The app was mandatory during the pandemic and has now become voluntary (and may become permanent), and throughout the different stages of the app, it was used for the digitization of the border. As this app is now voluntary, it is used for advanced customs and immigration declarations and continues to be used for the digitization of the border (Toronto Star, 2022f).

The government wants this app to become permanent in order to continue the digitization of the border and make it more efficient (Toronto Star, 2022f), yet the app has proved to cause chaos and difficulties for the people using it. An example of this chaos is:

In May, June and July, Pearson had the most significant delays among the world's 500 busiest airports, according to data from aviation intelligence company FlightAware. Over that three-month period, 52.8 per cent of flights leaving Toronto Pearson arrived at least 15 minutes late. Ms. Lantsman, [Conservative transport critic], said the statistic was an “international embarrassment” (Cardoso, 2022).

As this quotation mentions, ArriveCAN and restrictions during the pandemic caused a lot of chaos at ports of entry, but the government continued to push the digitization of the border through the ArriveCAN app.

The ArriveCAN app has now become voluntary, and the public has questioned the app as well as the companies that created it because they wish to know who made the app that was forced to be used by the public. Since the government forced the use of the ArriveCAN app on the public, the public wanted to know who made the app that caused an abundance of chaos at ports of entry. As mentioned previously, GC Strategies was the main company that handled the work of the ArriveCAN app (Toronto Star, 2023). It is a two-person firm in Ottawa, and this company was responsible for contacting other companies to build the app because, even though the company was paid the most and is mentioned the most in relation to the creation of the app, GC Strategies was not the company that built ArriveCAN (Toronto Star, 2023). As reported in the Toronto Star (2023), this company subcontracted other companies to build the app. A GC Strategies partner pointed out that they provided a team for the creation of the ArriveCAN app and were approached to do so (Toronto Star, 2023). This partner also claims that “[they] are, however, very proud of the team [they] gave the Government of Canada, whom they managed and gave direction to throughout the project” (Toronto Star, 2023). In addition, several sources have confirmed that the use of GC Strategies was “highly illogical and inefficient” because this



company did not build the app, they only subcontracted other companies to do so (Toronto Star, 2023).

Since GC Strategies subcontracted other companies to build the app, there were several other companies that were listed in relation to the creation of the app. The public wished to know the names of all of the companies that were a part of making the app because initially, this company and the government stated that there were only a few companies that were responsible for the app, but as new information and data emerged, twenty-seven companies were responsible for working on the app (Toronto Star, 2023). Some of these companies were listed, and “newly released documents obtained by the newspaper show the individual workers came from large firms, including BDO Canada, Optiv, KPMG, Macadamian Technologies, Level Access and Distill Mobile” (Toronto Star, 2023). This showed the lack of transparency that the government, CBSA, and GC Strategies had with the public and public records, because initially, they stated that six companies were subcontracted by GC Strategies when the actual number of companies that worked on the app was twenty-seven. There was also a lack of transparency relating to which companies were contacted and subcontracted by these agencies. As Karen Hogan, the Auditor General, stated, there should have been a paper trail of all of the records related to ArriveCAN, but when Hogan and her team ran an audit for the app, a paper trail for the records of this app was not found (House of Commons Canada, 2024a). Hogan stated that:

There was confusion right from the beginning. From April 2020 to July 2021, we found that the Public Health Agency of Canada, or PHAC, and CBSA did not work together to establish each agency's responsibilities for ArriveCAN. In this accountability void, neither organization developed or implemented good project management practices—such as developing objectives and goals, and budgets and cost estimates (House of Commons Canada, 2024a, p. 1).

As suggested in the quotation above, the agencies which were responsible for the app did not consult with each other about the prudent information relating to the app. As such, this led to a lack of knowledge and transparency because these agencies were not clear about which companies were contacted for the app's development and for what reasons. As the public questioned the use of GC Strategies for the development of this app, Hogan pointed out that:

In our examination of contracting practices, we saw little documentation to support how and why CBSA initially awarded GC Strategies the ArriveCAN contract through a non-competitive process. Only one potential contractor submitted a proposal, and that proposal did not come from GC Strategies (House of Commons Canada, 2024a, p. 1).

As suggested by the quotation above, GC Strategies was questionably hired for the development of the app, even though there was no process to look at other companies, and they subcontracted other companies to build the app. The public wanted to know who created the app, which is one reason an investigation into the app took place.

The uses of the ArriveCAN app, what it was made for, and who it was made by were questioned by the public, and this theme of app usage contributes to these factors as well as other discourses related to the ArriveCAN app. It was used to fill out personal, health, and travel information for travellers who wanted to cross at a port of entry (Toronto Star, 2022e). Travellers were coerced to fill out their information in the app. The government portrayed the app as speeding up lines at ports of entry (Wylie, 2022). It was used as an extra step at ports of entry where travellers had to submit their private information. From this information, CBSA officers would make their determinations of whether or not a traveller was allowed to travel based on the restrictions and whether or not the traveller met them. In this sense, the app was used as a form of health/mobility governance at ports of entry because the public would input their private information into the app. It would govern/control whether or not travellers were allowed to travel

based on the restrictions. It also restricted traveller movement due to the information that was inputted into the app. This is because if a traveller was unvaccinated, they were not allowed to travel, and the app would govern this due to the information that was submitted. The app was created for travellers to input their information, but many sources have stated that it has the capacity to move beyond its purpose for COVID-19 and can digitize the border and make it more efficient (The Winnipeg Sun, 2022). The border has become more digitized over the past few years, especially with the use of the ArriveCAN app. It was/is one more technology that has contributed to the technologization and digitization of the border.

The app was once mandatory during COVID-19 and has now become voluntary after the end of the pandemic (Toronto Star, 2022f). The government has also stated that it wanted to make the ArriveCAN app a permanent feature at ports of entry, and these facts show the purposes of the ArriveCAN app beyond the COVID-19 purposes that were stated by the government. The ArriveCAN app was never welcomed by the public, and when the government hinted at it becoming permanent, the negativity surrounding the app became worse, which again demonstrates the divergence of discourses surrounding the app between the government on the one hand, and the public and other actors on the other. Also, GC Strategies was the company that was contacted by the government to work on ArriveCAN, but there were many issues with this company and the transparency related to it, as seen above.

### **Public Privacy**

The third theme that emerged from the sources analyzed was public privacy. This theme emerged because the public viewed the ArriveCAN app as an invasion of privacy due to the personal and private information that was collected by the app (Artuso, 2022). As Artuso (2022) pointed out,

It's time to say farewell to Arrive-Can, a court challenge says. The Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms has asked for a judicial review of the program on behalf of 11 Canadians, arguing it violated their charter rights, proving both unreliable and discriminatory, the filing claims.

As this quotation pointed out, the public viewed this app as a breach of their privacy rights. They did not want to submit their private information to this app, which is why they were penalized (Artuso, 2022). Artuso (2022) said that:

"The applicants involved in this legal challenge have received fines of up to \$8,500 each and been forced to disclose private medical information via the ArriveCan," a statement from the Justice Centre says. "The legal challenge seeks to strike down the mandatory use of ArriveCan and declare unconstitutional the 14-day quarantine requirements for Canadians who refuse to use ArriveCan when returning home."

As stated above, the people who did not use the app to submit their personal health information received heavy fines or were forced to quarantine. Even though the public felt that their privacy was breached with the use of this app, they were still forced to submit their information. Health Canada:

... said it would not comment directly on the lawsuit as it is before the courts. "The Government of Canada has been made aware that the Justice Centre has filed a legal challenge in the Federal Court," a Health Canada statement says. "To help keep people in Canada safe, the Government of Canada put in place emergency border measures, in order to reduce the risk of the importation and transmission of COVID-19 and new variants in Canada related to international travel. The Government of Canada respects any individual's decision to present their case before the court and we await the court's decision on this matter." (Artuso, 2022).

As stated above, Health Canada continued to defend the app and its use during the pandemic as a way to protect the public from COVID-19, but "the court documents, which have not been proven in court, list 11 Canadians who were penalized for failure to use ArriveCan. The applicants cited privacy concerns in ArriveCan's use of their personal health information"

(Artuso, 2022). Even though the public was concerned about their privacy, they were penalized for not using the app, while Health Canada continued to support and defend its use. Travellers were forced to decide whether they wanted to give up their personal information, which breached their privacy rights, or be punished by paying fines or being forced to quarantine. Either way, serious issues were taking place because travellers were essentially forced to choose between giving up their privacy or being punished for not doing so. The Centre for International Governance Innovation mentioned that:

In private transactions, individuals can generally withhold or revoke consent if they are unhappy with the results of an automated decision-making process or algorithm. If one does not like the processes used by a private social media company such as, say, Facebook or Twitter, one can avoid using the service. Not so with ArriveCAN. Through the Quarantine Act, the government requires use of ArriveCAN as a “condition” of entry, with few exceptions and under significant monetary penalty for non-compliance (Malone, 2022).

As stated above, the public always has the right to withdraw their consent, especially regarding their privacy. However, that option does not exist regarding the ArriveCAN app because the public must complete the app with their personal information if they choose to travel.

This demonstrates the governmentality that occurred during the pandemic. As noted previously, governmentality consists of two notions, discipline and punishment (Foucault, 1977). The penalties imposed on the public by the government can be viewed through these notions, as the government aimed to discipline and maintain control over the public through the use of the app and restrictions. The public faced punishment from the government if they did not comply with the app and the restrictions implemented.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner investigated the complaints related to the public's privacy concerns regarding the ArriveCAN app. Many members of the public had filed a complaint over this issue. The complaint that began this investigation was:

Given that the information and instructions generated by ArriveCAN were inaccurate for certain Apple device users, the complainant alleges that the CBSA had failed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information used to determine an individual's quarantine requirements was as accurate as possible (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a).

From the complaint above, an investigation took place.

This investigation was launched and resulted in the Privacy Commissioner saying that the erroneous messages that were sent to travellers to quarantine under threat of being fined up to \$5,000 were a breach of the *Privacy Act* (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). These erroneous messages were sent to travellers due to an error within the database of the ArriveCAN app, and it identified some travellers who were fully vaccinated as unvaccinated and due to this, travellers felt that their personal information was not appropriately protected by the agencies that had this information (specifically the CBSA) (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). As this investigation ensued, the Privacy Commissioner stated that:

We would expect that where a system relies on human-decision makers to make the final decisions on impactful 'adverse' decisions, that clear 'positive action' by an identifiable human decision-maker should be required to initiate any impacts flowing from that decision. In other words: a.) the human decision-maker should take some positive action (selecting a digital option, signing a form, etc.) to clearly indicate what their decision is; b.) this should be accompanied by a record of what information the human decision maker relied on; and c.) that 'positive action' should be the trigger to initiate any results flowing from the adverse decision. i.e. the system should be designed so the suggested decision by the automated system cannot trigger any adverse action 'by default' (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a).

This statement pointed out that the CBSA should have had a human double-check this decision before applying it to the app. The app had a glitch which generated inaccurate information about travellers and sent these messages, and the Privacy Commissioner said that the CBSA should have had a human oversee these decisions made by the app.

The information of travellers that was used by CBSA and PHAC was personal information, and this information was used for an administrative purpose (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). As Section 3 of the *Privacy Act* states, an “administrative purpose, in relation to the use of personal information about an individual, means the use of that information in a decision making process that directly affects that individual” (Government of Canada, 2025). As this information was used in an administrative way, the Privacy Commissioner stated that subsection 6(2) of the *Privacy Act*, which is, “accuracy of personal information: (2) A government institution shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that personal information that is used for an administrative purpose by the institution is as accurate, up-to-date and complete as possible” (Government of Canada, 2025) did not occur (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). This was because:

Ultimately, we found that the CBSA did not meet the requirements of the *Privacy Act*, as it did not take all reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of the information that it used for an administrative decision-making process. Accordingly, our Office finds that the CBSA failed to respect its obligations under subsection 6(2) of the *Privacy Act*, and this complaint is therefore well-founded (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a).

As stated above, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner found that the CBSA used the personal information of travellers for an administrative purpose, but they did not take reasonable steps to make sure that this information was complete, accurate, and up-to-date (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a).

Specifically, as the investigation continued, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (2023a) pointed out:

in our view, the erroneous information was clearly used by CBSA for an administrative purpose (i.e. a decision-making process directly affecting the individuals). Specifically, the information was used by the ArriveCan application, under CBSA's control, to "decide" to: (i) instruct the affected travellers to quarantine, via the notifications/emails the ArriveCan application automatically sent, and (ii) notify PHAC, for enforcement purposes, that the individuals were required to quarantine. These decisions, while unintended and at odds with decisions made by CBSA screening officers at the border, nonetheless directly affected the individuals.

As pointed out, the ArriveCAN app automatically sent these erroneous messages to travellers, but it still 'decided' to send them and inform PHAC in case of enforcement needs. CBSA had control over the app, but the app still sent out these messages and informed PHAC as well. Due to this, the Privacy Commissioner stated that humans should oversee the app and large decisions, such as fining travellers for not quarantining.

The CBSA used travellers' personal information, but this information was not accurate due to the erroneous messages that were sent to travellers. The ArriveCAN app generated inaccurate information for travellers and sent them erroneous messages to quarantine when they did not need to (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). These travellers who were told to quarantine were fully vaccinated, which means they did not need to quarantine, but due to the inaccurate information generated by the ArriveCAN app about these travellers, they were seen as unvaccinated and instructed to quarantine. As stated by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (2023a),

To ensure the accuracy of information generated by automated processes, institutions are notably expected to implement, among other measures: Rigorous pre-release testing for issues that could lead to the highest negative impacts on



individuals, effective human intervention with respect to high impact decisions on individuals, and effective and timely correction and recourse for individuals.

As stated in the quotation above, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner pointed out that a technology, such as ArriveCAN, should be tested before its release, have human oversight, and have a quick correction if there are inaccuracies. This is because ArriveCAN version 3.0 was the one that sent the erroneous messages that impacted over 10,000 travellers, and this glitch was not fixed in a timely manner, considering it was fixed three weeks after these messages were sent (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). In addition, as pointed out by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (2023a),

... in our view, a significant (and presumably elevated) number of individuals complaining that ArriveCan had told them to quarantine despite them being fully vaccinated should have raised flags and been resolved in a matter of days not weeks given the high adverse impact on affected individuals. Further, we emphasize that this incident happened more than two years after the beginning of the pandemic and the introduction of ArriveCan, and we would therefore expect a commensurate level of resourcing and maturation of incident response mechanisms.

As pointed out in the quotation above, an abundance of travellers were complaining about the erroneous quarantine messages and the CBSA should have responded and fixed the error within a timely manner, which would have been a few days. As this error occurred after the app had been used for over two years, it was also expected that the error would be dealt with promptly, but it was not.

In these ways, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner decided that the complaint was well-founded (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). Once this complaint was deemed to be well-founded by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, they contacted CBSA and:

CBSA disagreed with our finding that it failed to take all reasonable steps to ensure accuracy. It also refused to implement our recommendation to correct the

inaccurate and sensitive information it holds for the affected travellers concerning quarantine status. We call on CBSA to reconsider its refusal to correct the erroneous data generated by the ArriveCan error and to put in place all necessary measures should it decide to proceed with similar tools in the future (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a).

As stated in the quotation above, CBSA refused to fix the inaccurate information of travellers within the ArriveCAN app. This inaccurate information resulted from a glitch within the app that CBSA had control over, yet they refused to correct the inaccurate information that was generated by the app; however, in the end, they agreed to correct the inaccurate information in their databases (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a).

Even though the public felt that their privacy was breached with the use of the app and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner said that the complaint of the erroneous messages breaching traveller privacy was well-founded, the government and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner also stated that they did not see that the ArriveCAN app breached any privacy rights in general (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b). As noted,

The Special Report finds that the federal government’s collection and use of personal information to track and control the spread of COVID-19 was generally done in compliance with privacy law... [More specifically,] our COVID-19 work found that the collection, use, disclosure and retention of personal information by federal institutions complied with the *Privacy Act*” (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b).

As stated above, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner did not find the use of ArriveCAN and personal information for the purposes of tracking and controlling the spread of COVID-19, as said by the government, a violation of the *Privacy Act*. As the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (2023b) stated, “the OPC’s latest survey of Canadians found that 40 per cent of those polled said that they were more concerned about privacy now than they were at the start of the pandemic.” This goes to show that the public was continuously concerned about their privacy

in relation to the ArriveCAN app, but the government and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner continued to state that the app and the collection of public personal information were not a breach of privacy in relation to the *Privacy Act*. The Privacy Commissioner stated that:

“Privacy matters to Canadians, and they need to know that they are not alone in protecting their fundamental right to privacy. The OPC is there to assist Canadians if they have questions or concerns about how their personal information is being collected, used, retained or disclosed”... “It is important that individuals ask questions and seek clarity from government about the purposes for which their personal information is being collected, used and disclosed. This Special Report to Parliament is a direct result of these questions being asked, and demonstrates the important role that the OPC plays in ensuring that privacy is protected – even and especially in times of emergency” (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b).

As noted in the quotation above, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner acknowledged that the public was concerned about their privacy and had questions about it in relation to COVID-19 and ArriveCAN. They wanted to reassure the public about their concerns and looked into their complaints. They determined that the collection and use of data was not a breach of public privacy, as well as the vaccine mandates (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b). This was because:

An investigation into widely publicized concerns over the government’s collection and use of mobility data found that the de-identification measures and safeguards against re-identification used were adequate... [and] the OPC investigated vaccine mandates for domestic air and rail passengers and international travellers entering Canada. The OPC found that the federal institutions involved complied with the *Privacy Act* (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b).

As stated above, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner investigated these concerns and found that, in general, the app, the government, and the CBSA did not breach any privacy rights

regarding the *Privacy Act* while enforcing ArriveCAN during the pandemic (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b).

Even though the Office of the Privacy Commissioner found that public privacy was not breached with the collection and use of data and vaccine mandates, they still highlighted that there could have been better measures to decrease public concern about privacy. This was because:

The OPC repeated its calls for federal privacy laws to be amended to include a clear legal framework that defines the different types of de-identified data, and specifies the rules that should govern the production, retention, use, disclosure, and collection of each type... The OPC identified gaps with respect to the assessment of potentially less privacy-invasive alternatives, such as pre-arrival COVID-19 testing, and the need for more clarity about what the mandates were trying to achieve. (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b).

As noted in the quotation above, even though the Office of the Privacy Commissioner determined that the collection and use of data and vaccine mandates did not breach privacy rights, they still showed how these things could have been done better to avoid issues of privacy. They also said that transparency with the public about where and how their information is being used would help with the concerns of privacy as well (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b). This shows that even though the Office of the Privacy Commissioner found that public privacy was breached due to the erroneous messages that were sent by ArriveCAN, the collection and use of data and vaccine mandates were not a breach of public privacy, according to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b). The public felt that their privacy was breached with all of these factors, but as stated above, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner said that the only place where privacy was breached was the erroneous messages and nothing else. The public's concerns about their privacy in relation to the

use of the ArriveCAN app and personal information collected were grave, yet the government and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner did not see this as well-founded.

Another reason the public thought the ArriveCAN app was an invasion of privacy was because, as stated earlier, the public, especially in terms of older generations, thought the ArriveCAN app was ageist and was not easy to use for the older generations (Toronto Star, 2022d). This was because if a traveller did not own a phone or did not know how to use the app, they were told to borrow a device. Due to this, the public thought “borrowing a device from an airport or hotel is not only awkward, but raises concerns about... privacy” (Toronto Star, 2022d). If a traveller borrows a device from another traveller, they would have to fill out their personal information on that device, which would cause concern for privacy issues. The CBSA also mentioned that “they can ask a friend or relative for help, even if they're not travelling together, and have them send a printout or screenshot to the traveller” (Toronto Star, 2022d). Once again, other people would be seeing the traveller’s personal information, which causes concerns for the privacy of their personal information.

Not only did the ArriveCAN app breach the privacy of travellers, but it also breached their human rights. This is because,

“Privacy and mobility rights, specifically the freedom to enter and leave the country, is a hallmark of a free society, and we believe the government has not provided sufficient justification to warrant such an egregious breach of personal medical information” (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022a).

As stated above, the public believed that their personal information was breached because the government forced the public to enter their information into the ArriveCAN app in order to travel. But, there was an insignificant reason for this information to be insisted on by the

government, as the public said. Canadians' rights were breached because they no longer had the freedom to enter and leave at their own will.

The right to freely enter and leave the country was not the only right in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* breached by the government concerning the ArriveCAN app (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b). As the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (2022b) pointed out, the government made a decision during COVID-19 and “the Decision, with limited exceptions, requires Canadians who are not vaccinated with the Covid-19 vaccine or who are vaccinated but do not use ArriveCAN to undergo testing and a mandatory 14-day quarantine upon returning to Canada” (2022, p. 3). This decision led to many privacy issues, as mentioned earlier, as well as *Charter* rights issues. The public stated that many sections of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* were violated, and one of those sections was:

Section 2(a): The Right to Freedom of Religion: The Decision violates the right to freedom of religion. The Decision imposes a substantial burden on Canadians who choose not to be vaccinated as an expression of sincerely held conscientious or religious beliefs. The Decision does not include religious exemptions (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b, p. 12).

This quotation points out that the decision of the government to force the public to receive their vaccinations and use the ArriveCAN app violated their right to freedom of religion. Potentially, section 6 was violated as well. This is because:

Section 6: The Right to Leave and Enter Canada: The Decision violates the mobility rights of the Applicants by selectively discriminating against them for their decision for declining to provide private medial information and declining to use ArriveCAN, as well as other unreasonable, harsh, and arbitrary consequences upon re-entry to the country (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b p.12).

As pointed out, travellers were unable to enter and leave Canada freely unless they gave up their mobility rights and received vaccinations, as well as used the ArriveCAN app. This violated their section 6 *Charter* right to enter and leave the country freely. The next section of the *Charter* that was evidently violated was section 7 (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b). This is because:

Section 7: The Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person: Quarantining all unvaccinated Canadians and those who do not use ArriveCAN for 14 days upon re-entering the country impairs liberty in a manner that is arbitrary, and overbroad, and therefore violates the principles of fundamental justice (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b, p. 12).

As stated in the quotation above, forcing travellers to quarantine because they did not receive their vaccinations and did not use ArriveCAN to fill out their personal information is a violation of section 7 of the *Charter*. This limits their freedom and liberty. The next section of the *Charter* that was potentially violated was section 8 (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b).

This is because:

Section 8: Right to be free from Unreasonable Search and Seizure: The mandatory requirement to use ArriveCAN and its vaccine status disclosure requirements constitutes a search and breaches the right of the Applicants to be free from unreasonable search and seizure. Moreover, to the extent that ArriveCAN actively monitors the location of those Canadians forced to utilize it, the same is an unjustified breach of section 8 (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b, p. 12).

This quotation points out that the ArriveCAN app is a form of unreasonable search and seizure because a traveller is forced to disclose their personal information. This disclosure of personal information is a violation of section 8, and so is the tracking of a traveller's location. The next section of the *Charter* that was said to be violated was section 9 (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b). This is because:

Section 9: The Right not to be Detained Arbitrarily: The Decision occasions the arbitrary detention of healthy, asymptomatic travellers merely for being unvaccinated or failing to use ArriveCAN and is a breach of section 9 of the Charter which protects individuals against arbitrary detention (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b, p. 12-13).

As stated in the quotation above, when travellers were detained because they were unvaccinated or did not use the ArriveCAN app, they were arbitrarily detained. This is because, even though they did not have symptoms of COVID-19, they did not receive vaccines, or did not use the app, which led to their detention. The next section of the *Charter* that was potentially violated was section 10 because:

Section 10 (b): Right to Counsel: The decision violated the Applicant's section 10 (b) rights by not affording them the opportunity to speak to counsel once they have been detained (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b, p. 13).

As stated in the quotation above, once a traveller was detained, they were not given a lawyer to speak with. This violated section 10(b) of their *Charter* rights because all people who are detained are given the right to contact their counsel, but travellers who were unvaccinated or did not use the ArriveCAN app were not given the chance to contact their counsel, even though they were detained. The last section that was said to be violated was section 15 of the *Charter*, and this is because:

Section 15: The Right to Equality: The Decision violates the Applicants' section 15 rights to equality because it creates a distinction on the basis of religion and disability, which are enumerated grounds. Moreover, the Decision violates section 15 by discriminating on the basis of Covid vaccination status (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b, p. 13).

As the quotation states, travellers who did not receive vaccinations or did not use the app were not treated equally to the travellers who did. Some people did not receive these vaccinations due to disabilities, and some for religious reasons. Because they did not get their vaccinations, they



were treated differently from the people who did, which violates section 15 because they were not treated equally to the people who received vaccinations.

Seven sections of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* were potentially violated.

Travellers' rights were violated with the use of the ArriveCAN app and vaccinations. One example of a traveller whose rights and privacy were violated is:

The Applicant, Mr. Scott Bennett is 23 years old, a resident of Ontario, and a Canadian citizen. Mr. Bennett has a medical exemption for the Covid-19 vaccine due to a medical contraindication. Mr. Bennett returned to Canada from a trip via Pearson on July 12, 2022 and was told by a CBSA agent to use ArriveCAN. He refused due to privacy concerns and CBSA referred him to PHAC. PHAC agents insisted that Mr. Bennett use ArriveCAN. Peel Regional Police was also present and requested he produce a second piece of identification, despite already having produced his passport. Mr. Bennett was informed by the Peel Police that he was being detained and that they would search his person for additional identification if he continued to refuse. He was not informed of his right to counsel at any point. Peel Regional Police ultimately did not do a pat-down search. Mr. Bennett was issued a fine for non-compliance with section 58 Quarantine Act for \$6,255 (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b, p. 7-8).

This quotation illustrates that sections 6, 9, 10 (b), and 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* were violated in Mr. Bennett's case because Mr. Bennett had a medical exemption and could not receive the COVID-19 vaccinations. He did not use the ArriveCAN app due to issues of privacy. He was detained by the police when he refused to use the app and did not present a second ID, even though a CBSA officer had seen his passport. Once he was detained, the police said they would search him for a second ID if he did not produce one and did not provide him with the right to counsel. As shown above, many sections of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* were violated for Mr. Bennett as well as several other travellers.

The public believed that the government infringed upon their privacy rights, and this theme of public privacy consists of many examples of different discourses where the public

believed their privacy and privacy rights were breached by using the app, but the government argued otherwise. The public thought their privacy was invaded due to the private and personal information that was collected by the ArriveCAN app, but they were unable to travel without surrendering this information to the app. Essentially, the public felt that they had to choose between surrendering their private information to the app or travelling, but the government did not see it this way because they believed that the app was not an invasion of privacy. The public was penalized with fines or forced quarantines if they did not use the app (Artuso, 2022), yet the government continued to defend the app. The Privacy Commissioner agreed with the public that the erroneous messages sent by the ArriveCAN app instructing people to quarantine when they did not need to was a breach of public privacy, however the government then continued to state that the app did not breach any privacy rights in general (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). An example of the app being ageist was brought up as a breach of privacy as well because seniors who do not have phones or cannot work them could ask people for help, but that allowed others to look at the seniors private/personal information, which is the reason the public saw this as an invasion of privacy as well (Toronto Star, 2022d). Yet, the government still defended the app. Not only did the public think that their privacy rights were invaded, but their human rights were invaded as well (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b). They believed that their rights from the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* were violated (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b), as stated previously, but again, the government did not stop defending the app.

### **Scrap the App**

The fourth and final theme that resulted from analyzing the sources was the slogan ‘scrap the app.’ This slogan was created by the Conservative Party of Canada (the Official Opposition

at the time) after the outrage that occurred due to the chaos and inconvenience of the ArriveCAN app. After analyzing the sources, the fourth theme, 'scrap the app,' was a theme on its own, but it also encompassed the other three themes as well. This was because several sources pointed out reasons for wanting to 'scrap the app,' but these sources also confirmed the 'more mentioned' inefficiencies for wanting to 'scrap the app' as well. For example, the first theme, which was cost, looked at the actual cost of the app and the cost to the public through the inconveniences that the app caused. These inconveniences included hassles, such as delays, lineups, flight cancellations, bottlenecks, and more. The second theme, which was app usage, looked at how the government wanted the app to become permanent and looked at the companies involved in the development of the app. The third theme, which was the theme of public privacy, looked at how the public felt that their privacy was breached with the use of the ArriveCAN app. In this way, the theme of 'scrap the app' mentioned these key findings because these were the reasons the public, the Conservative Party, and CBSA officers wanted to 'scrap the app,' along with a few other reasons, which are mentioned below.

As mentioned above, the ArriveCAN app was inconvenient and caused many hassles for travellers. An example of one of the hassles was the glitches that were occurring with the app and:

Elaine Tack, an independent producer and former television journalist, lives in Clayton, N.Y., and has been a member [of The Grenadier Island Country Club in Ontario] since 2004. She said she played tennis at the club last Saturday and filled in the ArriveCAN app, specifying that she has been vaccinated twice and received two booster shots. On Sunday, she was contacted by Health Canada and told she had to quarantine for 14 days. "It's a little disheartening. We did everything legally. I love going to Canada but Canada is prohibiting me from doing that," she said (Iverson, 2022).

As mentioned above, Tack filled out the ArriveCAN app with her information, yet the app still told her to quarantine for fourteen days. She also said:

... that the app seems to think that she's in Canada. "No one can tell me what to do. To me, it seems like a glitch in the system. But if I can't go for the rest of the season, I won't continue my membership. Why would I?" The ArriveCAN app is mandatory for international travellers visiting Canada. But it is subject to heavy criticism from people on both sides of the border. Conservative MP, Tony Baldinelli, who represents Niagara Falls, told the National Post last week that there are numerous cases of the app telling vaccinated travellers to quarantine despite testing negative (Iverson, 2022).

This quotation stated that Tack was back in the U.S., yet the ArriveCAN app continued to think she was still in Canada and told her to quarantine. This showed that the app was not accurate and glitched a lot because Tack was not the only traveller who was told to quarantine for fourteen days, even though she had proper vaccinations. Several sources have confirmed that 10,200 travellers were directed to quarantine for fourteen days in a single month, even though they had proper vaccination status due to a glitch in the ArriveCAN app (Toronto Star, 2022c). This glitch led the app to send erroneous messages to travellers to quarantine for fourteen days when they did not need to (Toronto Star, 2022c).

Glitches were one of the hassles that travellers experienced with the ArriveCAN app, and delays, flight cancellations, lineups, and bottlenecks were the other hassles that they experienced. The inefficiencies that the ArriveCAN app caused led to these hassles at ports of entry. Travellers were fed up with these hassles and stated:

"Anybody who's travelling or wants to start travelling is pretty intimidated because of the massive lineups and the waits, and it makes travelling very unpleasant," Bergen, [interim Conservative leader], told reporters. Indeed, Toronto's embattled Pearson International Airport became the subject of a viral video Monday when former NHL star Ryan Whitney dubbed it "the worst airport on earth" after he experienced a series of flight delays, cancellations and

long lines (Toronto Star, 2022g).

As stated in the quotation above, the inefficiencies related to the use of the ArriveCAN app were a hassle for travellers. They experienced many hassles due to these inefficiencies that came with the app, but the government has also stated that these hassles are due to labour shortages as well (Toronto Star, 2022c). The federal transport minister stated, “labour shortages are the ‘root cause of airport congestion,’ ... while defending the use of the ArriveCAN app for arriving international passengers by arguing it has reduced delays” (Toronto Star, 2022c). This pointed out that the government and agencies working with them continued to praise the app. They also continued its use for the digitization of the border (Toronto Star, 2022f), to stop the spread of COVID-19, keep the public safe, and speed up lines at ports of entry, even though the public and the Conservative Party were against it (Wylie, 2022). The government continued to state that ArriveCAN was helpful and to reduce delays at ports of entry:

Travellers can help by ensuring that their ArriveCAN submission is completed within 72 hours of arrival at the border with all the required information including vaccination evidence. The completion of ArriveCAN before arriving at the border helps to improve the flow across the border and minimize delays. It is the fastest, easiest and most secure way for travellers to show they meet public health requirements (Government of Canada, 2022b).

As noted above, the government continued to state that the app was reducing delays and that the public could help with long lines at ports of entry by using the app in advance, while the public and the Conservative Party continued to state that the app was not helpful.

As mentioned above, the government blamed the delays, flight cancellations, lineups, and more on COVID-19 and labour shortages (Cardoso, 2022). They continued to approve of the ArriveCAN app and said that the app was working in terms of helping with these hassles, but the public and the Conservative Party thought otherwise. As Cardoso (2022) stated:

It has taken many departing travellers hours to get through security, only to find that their flights have been delayed by several hours – or cancelled altogether. Meanwhile, arriving passengers have had to wait hours to deplane and get through customs, and then discover their bags lost among a sea of luggage.

As this quotation states, these hassles continued, and the public's frustration grew with the inefficiencies and inconveniences that seemed never-ending. As Zwaagstra (2022) pointed out:

... if we're looking at inconveniencing 70,000 lives, the app more than fits the bill. This useless app has caused enormous stress at the border, forced travellers into pointless quarantines and contributed to the chaotic situation at our major airports.

The stress at ports of entry during the pandemic was clear. Even though travellers struggled with hassles at ports of entry:

Underlying these issues is a complex system that reached a breaking point during the pandemic. As detailed in a Globe and Mail story earlier this week, the airline industry aggressively conserved cash by laying off thousands of workers. When the demand for air travel began roaring back in early 2022, airlines and airports were caught flat-footed, unable to quickly increase staff to meet the crush of passengers. Labour shortages have stretched across most areas of airport operation, including ramp, gate and cabin crew, cargo, baggage handling and security screening. Combined, these staffing issues have had a significant impact on the performance of Toronto Pearson, which is by far Canada's busiest airport (Cardoso, 2022).

As the quotation above mentions, airlines were unable to meet the demand for travel once the pandemic had slowed due to the layoff of several workers during COVID-19, and these layoffs were one of the reasons why delays, lineups, flight cancellations, and more occurred.

Labour shortages were one of the reasons why ports of entry were experiencing these hassles during and after the pandemic. The ArriveCAN app was also a main reason for these, yet the government and agencies that helped with the development of the app continued to praise the app and stated that the only reason why these hassles were occurring at ports of entry was

because of labour shortages, not because of ArriveCAN (Cardoso, 2022). As reported to the Toronto Star (2022c), ““there is an imbalance between the appetite of people who want to travel and the ability to service those who want to travel,” Omar Alghabra told the House of Commons standing committee on transport on Friday. “Labour shortage at airports, labour shortage at airlines, labour shortage at other agencies.”” Airlines were inefficient and could not handle the abundance of travellers due to staffing issues.

Labour shortages were a problem for travellers and ports of entry, but the ArriveCAN app was an issue at ports of entry as well and was overlooked by the government. As the Customs and Immigration Union, which represents CBSA officers, have said:

... many travellers are still arriving without having completed the app, requiring assistance from CBSA officers and taking up more time. Alghabra said without ArriveCAN, "we would be adding several minutes to each passenger" to manually check their vaccination status. “I can assure you, if we suspend ArriveCAN today, it will add significant complications to the congestions that we have at our airports,” Alghabra told the committee (Toronto Star, 2022c).

This points out that Alghabra, the Federal Transport Minister, and subsequently the government, truly believed that the ArriveCAN app was speeding up lines at ports of entry and making things more efficient. The CBSA Union, which reported to the Toronto Star (2022c) said:

... the app, along with short staffing, continue to be causes of significant delays. Pointing to the 99 per cent figure, the union's president, Mark Weber, told the Star that "in reality, that's the number of people who completed after we helped them." He said he would estimate the number of people who completed the app themselves prior to arrival is probably closer to 60 to 70 per cent.

As has been pointed out, ArriveCAN took up a lot of officer time, and they have stated that the app was a waste of their time because they could have put that energy and time elsewhere (Tumilty, 2022a). The CBSA Union and officers agreed with this; however, the CBSA vice-president pointed out that:

... about 99 per cent of air and marine travellers are completing the app, and more than 90 per cent of travellers by land. Without it, information on vaccination would be collected by paper or orally from travellers and then inputted by a CBSA officer, "and so without ArriveCAN, it would take far greater time to process individuals than it currently takes," Vinette said (Toronto Star, 2022c).

As noted above, the contrast between the CBSA officers and the Union versus the CBSA agency and the government is quite large. Officers and the Union have clearly stated their disagreement with the use of the ArriveCAN app, yet the agency itself and the government continued to state the app's 'beneficial features.' As noted by Tumilty (2022b):

Ottawa Transport Minister Omar Alghabra defended the government's ArriveCAN app Friday, saying despite the claims of customs officers, airlines, airports and border communities it is not a hindrance to travel. "There is no evidence whatsoever that ArriveCAN is causing any problems," he told MPs at the commons transport committee. He said, while there are still problems, air travel is improving and becoming more reliable. He said, by collecting vaccine information in advance, ArriveCAN speeds up the process. "There are those who have a vested interest in embellishing reality and undermining confidence in our airline sector only to score political points," he said. "ArriveCAN is actually helping process arrivals much faster and helping reduce congestion."

As the quotation above states, the government undermined the experience of customs officers, border communities, airports, and airlines by saying that the app is not a problem, even though all of these actors were saying that it was. The experiences of these agencies have led them to say that the app is a hindrance to everyone who uses it, yet the government doubled down by saying that these agencies are essentially lying. The government then continued to point out that ArriveCAN improves and speeds up lineups and travel time, even though the public, CBSA officers, airlines, airports, and communities have continuously pointed out their negative experiences with the app and the problems with it. In addition,

Mark Webber, president of the Customs and Immigrations union, testified to MPs in June and said the app forced his members to become IT consultants to



help people fill out the app. "Every Border Officer working on the front line will tell you that the implementation of the ArriveCAN application has seen processing times skyrocket" he said at the time. Airlines and airports across the country have also called for the app to be scrapped (Tumilty, 2022b).

This quotation makes it clear that CBSA officers and the Union were wasting time trying to help people with the ArriveCAN app. Instead of helping travellers with the app and subsequently increasing processing times, they could have used this time elsewhere and consequently sped up these processing times. As such, the CBSA Union, officers, public, Conservative Party, and many more agencies wanted to 'scrap the app,' yet the government continued its use.

The government and the CBSA were responsible for the creation of the ArriveCAN app, and continued to push its use throughout the pandemic (House of Commons Canada, 2024c). The House of Commons Canada (2024c) noted that "the government gave an award to CBSA for purchasing. They gave them an unsung hero award, which was awarded to the procurement team for the purchase and development of ArriveCAN." This shows that the CBSA agency and government were/are supporting the use of ArriveCAN and were ignoring the public and the Conservative Party's negative discourses surrounding the app. As such, the public, the Conservative Party, and CBSA officers wanted to 'scrap the app,' yet the government added fuel to the fire by continuing its use.

Even though the public, the Conservative Party, and CBSA officers wanted the app gone, the government disagreed. The hassles that came with the app were irritating for travellers, and they wanted to 'scrap the app,' but the government continued to praise it. As these hassles continued during the pandemic:

The [House of Commons standing committee on transport was] looking into the delays and flight cancellations that have plagued Canadian airports over the last few months amid a surge in air travel, leading to long security lineups, planes

waiting hours on the tarmac, people sleeping on airport floors due to missed connections, and lost baggage. The situation became so bad that Toronto Pearson International Airport and Air Canada each ranked number one in the world last month for flight delays (Toronto Star, 2022c).

This quotation above suggests that the delays, flight cancellations, and other inefficiencies got to the point where travellers had to sleep on the airport floor and the House of Commons committee had to step in to look into this. Due to these hassles, the public and the Conservative Party wished for the app to be scrapped, yet the Liberal government continued its use and avoided accountability for the failures of the app. As this app's use continued:

Transport Minister Omar Alghabra defended the federal government's actions in trying to contain the chaos that has plagued Toronto Pearson International Airport, telling a parliamentary committee on Friday that COVID-19 was largely to blame for months of travel disruptions. Calling the delays experienced by travellers "frustratingly unacceptable," Mr. Alghabra said the problems were the result of the pandemic and subsequent labour shortages. He also said that the ArriveCAN app, a requirement for travellers heading to Canada from abroad, was not responsible for delays at the border, despite MPs suggesting otherwise (Cardoso, 2022).

As the above quotation suggests, the government believed and pushed the opinion that the app was not the problem, but it was COVID-19 and labour shortages that were causing these inconveniences and hassles at ports of entry. When Alghabra was asked:

"Does the minister believe that the government bears any responsibility, in any way, for what has transpired this summer?" asked Conservative transport critic Melissa Lantsman. "Yes or no?" "I hope that months from now, Canadians will look back and see their government was taking real action, doing everything we can to address the root causes of the issues," Mr. Alghabra said. "I hear that the answer is no," Ms. Lantsman replied. Xavier Barsalou-Duval, Bloc Québécois transport critic, later said, "The problem's clearly on your end. Instead of taking action, you chose to blame airports and airlines." "We acted quickly," Mr. Alghabra responded. "We were preparing for it, but the surge ended up being beyond what was expected" (Cardoso, 2022).

The quotation above highlights the lack of accountability that the government was/is willing to take in relation to the failures and hassles of the ArriveCAN app. Alghabra responded to these questions in a way that the government was able to avoid responsibility and accountability for the hassles at ports of entry. Not only did the government avoid accountability for overspending on the ArriveCAN app, but they also avoided accountability for the hassles that the app caused at ports of entry. Cardoso (2022) noted that:

As Transport Minister, Mr. Alghabra has repeatedly come under fire for Toronto Pearson's dysfunction. Experts told The Globe earlier this week that the federal government was in part responsible for a broken system that has minimized accountability around the airport crisis. Duncan Dee, a former chief operating officer at Air Canada, said Mr. Alghabra's "tone was most definitely defensive." "He was desperately trying to broaden the focus of the committee to beyond just what he does – to all the other players – to describe the complexity of the situation, and in doing so, escape any responsibility," Mr. Dee said. "It really reveals the mindset that, 'Yes, this an inconvenience for us as a government, but it's not something we're responsible for.'"

As mentioned in this quotation, the government has hesitated and avoided taking accountability for the failures of ArriveCAN and has tried to blame other factors for its failures, while still praising and defending the use of the app.

The government intended to make the ArriveCAN app permanent, which is another reason the public, the Conservative Party, and CBSA officers wanted to 'scrap the app.' They highly disliked the app during the pandemic and found it frustrating to use, yet the government tried to extend the use of the app by making it permanent. Many sources have confirmed that the app was not user-friendly for older generations, and some people in the older generations do not own phones where they can download and use the app (Brown-John, 2022). They also pointed out that the public found the app annoying and difficult to use (Maddeaux, 2022). Zwaagstra (2022) stated that "the ArriveCan app has been an unmitigated disaster. But there's one thing we

can say about this government - it never lets abject failure prevent it from doubling down on its mistakes.” Not only did the government try to make the app permanent, but it also avoided accountability and responsibility for its failures. One example of the failure of ArriveCAN that Zwaagstra (2022) pointed out was:

We recently saw yet another very good reason to scrap the ArriveCan app. The Rogers network went down for an entire day, leaving millions of Canadians without cellphone service. Unsurprisingly, this meant many Canadians couldn't access or fill in the ArriveCan app. The Canada Border Services Agency had no choice but to announce travellers could submit their documentation via paper forms during the outage. So ArriveCan really isn't essential after all. The network outage reminded us it's entirely possible to safely cross the border without an app. Too bad this government doesn't care about common sense.

This goes to show that the ArriveCAN app was not an essential tool for travelling during the pandemic. If travellers and officers were able to cross borders and board airplanes without using the app during the outage, then it meant that they were able to do so outside of the outage as well. The Liberal government continued the restrictions and the use of the app, even though many parties, including the Conservatives and the public, were against it. The Conservatives continued to speak about the downfalls of the ArriveCAN app and said:

We need to look at the facts. The ArriveCAN app has crashed for some users. Many cannot access it because of poor cell service. Many seniors do not have smart phones, and for others, costly data plans are out of reach. I ask members to keep in mind that all of these people are double-vaccinated Canadians, yet there is no re- course for them. They were forced into quarantine because of poor communication from the government (House of Commons Canada, 2021d, p. 668).

Even though the Conservatives continuously pointed out the flaws of the app, the Liberal government continued its use.

The public wanted to ‘scrap the app’ for many reasons, and another reason was due to the privacy issues that arose from the use of the app. Many people had concerns about their privacy

when they were forced to complete the ArriveCAN app because it asked for personal information. Complaints were filed with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, and they looked into the issues that the complainants had in regards to their privacy while using the ArriveCAN app (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). Travellers complained that they were giving up their privacy by using this app (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). Not only was a traveller's privacy violated with the use of the app, but their *Charter* rights were violated as well (as mentioned previously) (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b).

The use of the ArriveCAN app violated several *Charter* rights, and travellers received consequences for not using the app. Several sources have indicated that:

Failure to complete ArriveCAN can result in an individual being required to quarantine and undergo COVID-19 testing - similar to the requirements for individuals who are unvaccinated - and travellers may also be fined (Toronto Star, 2022c).

As the quotation above states, travellers who fail to use the ArriveCAN app were forced to quarantine or pay fines. These travellers who did not complete the app were punished, yet the government said the app was never meant to be punitive (Tumilty, 2022c). One example of the ArriveCAN app and the forced quarantine or fines being horrendous is given by Tony Baldinelli, a member of the Conservative Party, and he said:

Mr. Speaker, as an MP with four border crossings in my riding, I can tell members that the ArriveCAN app has been a real mess. Take the example of Bernadette in my riding. She was forced into a 14-day quarantine when she is double vaccinated and had a booster. She is now receiving threatening phone calls harassing her to complete her testing requirements or face jail time and/or a \$650,000 fine. She is 75 years old (House of Commons Canada, 2021e, p. 752).

As stated above, the ArriveCAN app was not beneficial and the Conservative Party, along with many other social actors, was against it, yet the Liberal government continued its use.

The public, the Conservative Party, and CBSA officers wanted to ‘scrap the app’ due to the penalties that arose from not using the app. This is because:

Canadians and permanent residents who refuse to use the app, or encounter problems with it, are subject to additional border delays, mandatory quarantine and even fines, while foreign nationals who don't upload their information to ArriveCan may be denied boarding or even turned away at the border (Passifume, 2022).

The quotation above shows the difficulties the travellers could face if they did not follow the rules of ArriveCAN. Travellers who wanted to avoid these difficulties ensured they used the app, although the app faced glitches that caused these difficulties inevitably, but travellers who did not or could not (for technical reasons) fill out the app were fined or coerced to quarantine. As Hopper (2022b) mentions:

Left unsaid is that failure to complete ArriveCAN can result in fines of \$5,000 and mandatory 14-day quarantine - a factor that is likely having some effect on driving up compliance rates. And even then, the accuracy of the numbers have been consistently denied by the federal workers actually tasked with ensuring ArriveCAN compliance.

As mentioned above, travellers were hesitant to comply with the app due to the repercussions of filling it out incorrectly, and were being fined or quarantined for using it incorrectly or not at all, which is why the public, the Conservative Party, and CBSA officers decided they wanted to ‘scrap the app.’ As Hopper (2022c) stated:

Technically, they can jail you for non-compliance. If you're a Canadian who shows up at the border, and say you haven't filled out ArriveCAN (and don't intend to), the Canada Border Services Agency has the authority to order you into 14-day quarantine. If you crumple up the quarantine order and go about your business as normal, Health Canada could technically fine you \$750,000 or throw you in jail for up to six months.

As stated above, the repercussions for not completing the requirements for the ArriveCAN app were steep and could go as far as imprisoning someone. Hopper (2022c) mentioned that several arrests were made during the pandemic in relation to people not complying with the requirements of the ArriveCAN app. This shows that the repercussions for ignoring the app were severe because the government did not tolerate defiance of the app or the restrictions, although this shows the punitiveness (mentioned further below) of the app and the government.

Conservative MPs also stated to the government that the fines that were paid by travellers who did not or could not use the app should be refunded (Tumilty, 2022d). Although during the pandemic, the government pointed out that:

... there have been problems, but stressed the government isn't looking to use the app to punish people. "While we are aware some travellers may have experienced some glitches, in cases where people have issues using the app, the CBSA's top priority is always to help and educate, not be punitive" (Tumilty, 2022c).

This shows that the government was threatening to fine and quarantine travellers who did not use the app, yet still said their goal was not to be punitive. Fining and quarantining travellers for not using the app seems very punitive, but as the government points out, that was not their intention.

The government said that their intentions with the ArriveCAN app were never meant to be punitive, but the fines and quarantines say otherwise. The public also felt that the app was an intrusion on their personal and private information (Benn, 2022). As Benn (2022) said:

Canada's Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos recently stated every Canadian should keep "up to date" on his government's preferred COVID-19 injections by accepting a booster shot every nine months. Duclos's remarks are a clear signal the Canadian government intends to impose compliance with a never-ending booster regime as a requirement for international travel.

As this quotation states, the public sees this app and injections as an imposition and thinks the government wants to make the public comply with the app and with possible future requirements as well. To clarify:

The ArriveCan app [Duclos fears] will be required to compile and present a continuously growing history of medical injections, at least until the adoption of some more comprehensive digital ID that would render ArriveCan redundant. The government in Ottawa appears to have an unhealthy desire to digitally control the compliance of Canadians with evolving, arbitrary mandates and to restrict the movements of the non-compliant (Benn, 2022).

The quotation above mentions that the public thinks the government is imposing on them with the app and injections because they would have all of their information at all times. This makes it seem like the government is controlling the public because, essentially, the government is telling the public what to do and saying that there will be consequences for not obeying. In this way, it can be seen why the public believes that the government is imposing on them and trying to control them.

The belief that the government was trying to control the public with the app and restrictions was a strong one and was backed by many reasons to believe such a thing. For example, as stated above, the government wanted the public to receive booster shots every nine months, the ArriveCAN app was mandatory during the pandemic, vaccinations were mandatory to do anything, and more (Benn, 2022). Since these things were mandatory and the government was not allowing the public to do anything without them, the public felt imposed on and controlled. As Cross (2022) stated:

[ArriveCAN] was imposed by a dictatorial federal government to control its population, make travel difficult and keep citizens spending at home, not abroad. And this spendthrift government needs all the tax income it can grab to continue bribing us with our own money. No other country kept the COVID-19 screws on as long as Canada. Why? Are they healthier than us? Is our "science" better than



theirs? No. We are simply a more docile nation of sheeple. ArriveCAN was designed to be restrictive, not protective, and it did that jailer job very well.

Again, this quotation proves that the public felt intruded on and controlled by the government because nothing was allowed without the specific requirements that the government had laid out for the public, and if these requirements were not fulfilled, there were consequences. Thus, the public clearly and openly stated that they wanted ArriveCAN destroyed for many reasons, including the intrusion on their information and the controlling hand of the government through this app.

Many travellers were faced with concerns while travelling and using the app due to the consequences that may occur if they did not or could not complete the requirements of the ArriveCAN app. One example of this is:

Windsorite Jeremy McLellan has twice crossed the border recently. While both he and his wife are vaccinated, his four-year-old twin daughters were not eligible at the time, which is what he believed sparked a cascade of emails ordering his family to quarantine, even though they were exempt from doing so. "I do worry a little bit because we live in a border city," McLellan said. "We should be able to freely cross." Fifteen days later, when his family again crossed and used his wife's ArriveCan account, the family received the same notifications (Saylor, 2022).

As stated above, this family encountered many troubles in relation to the ArriveCAN app and the consequences of not using it at all or using it incorrectly. They had the proper vaccinations and filled out the app correctly, yet they were still instructed to quarantine by the app. This shows the inaccuracy and dysfunctionality of the app. In addition:

McLellan said he consulted border officials and Public Health Canada in a bid to "cover his bases" and ensure his family didn't need to quarantine, which was confirmed. McLellan said he asked for a record in writing, but more than a month later, he said he hasn't heard back. But he said the experience was concerning given the possibility of steep fines. "The fines are astronomical and you're basically at their mercy once you're at the border," McLellan said. "I don't

want to get flagged for any reason” (Saylor, 2022).

As McLellan pointed out, the fines for not using the app were concerning, but even though he used the app to fill out the required information for himself and his family, the app continued to direct them to quarantine when they did not need to. This led him to be concerned about the fines for not obeying the app and the requirements of using it.

This app also impacted many industries and businesses, such as the tourism industry, travel industry, businesses related to these, and the economy. This was because the app deterred travellers from travelling to Canada due to the complexities and inefficiencies of the app. As Jim Diodati, the Mayor of Niagara Falls said, ““I’ll tell you something: you upset your customers, they go back and tell all their friends,” added Diodati. “Many people are bypassing Canada, and that’s going to have long-lasting effects on this country”” (Lévesque, 2022). As Diodati stated, travellers were avoiding Canada, and this heavily impacted the tourism and travel industries and businesses, which in turn impacted the economy. These industries were hit hard, and as a result, so was the economy, because many communities depend on tourism for income (Toronto Star, 2022b).

Due to all of these concerning reasons, not only did the public, the Conservative Party, and CBSA officers want to ‘scrap the app,’ but the NDP Party wanted it scrapped as well. As MP Brian Masse (NDP – Windsor West) said:

... he believes vaccination status can be checked at the border instead of using the app, adding the app doesn’t prevent someone from contracting COVID-19 after completing the app declaration. “It just doesn’t make any sense anymore, for public safety or a practical application,” Masse said (Saylor, 2022).

As mentioned above, several sources have pointed out that the ArriveCAN app did not make sense because the app did not stop an individual from contracting COVID-19; thus, the app was

not helpful and should not be continued. Yet, even though the public, the Conservative Party, CBSA officers, and the NDP Party had voiced their concerns clearly with the app, pointed out its downfalls, and wanted to ‘scrap the app,’ the government continued to say that they support and use it for public safety, to stop the spread of COVID-19, speed up lines at ports of entry, and make it a permanent tool for the digitization of the border (Toronto Star, 2022f).

Many social actors, such as the public, the Conservative Party, CBSA officers, and the NDP Party wanted to ‘scrap the app,’ and this theme of ‘scrap the app’ encompassed the previous three themes and was a theme on its own. The reasons why the public, the Conservative Party and the CBSA Union wanted to ‘scrap the app’ were due to the cost, app usage, public privacy, and more. The actual cost of the app and the costs to the public in terms of the inconveniences were a significant reason to ‘scrap the app.’ The government wanting to make the app permanent, even after the disapproval by the public, and the unclear names of the companies that worked on the app were another reason. And public privacy, where the public believed that their privacy was breached, was a big reason for wanting to ‘scrap the app’ as well. The government also lacked accountability and responsibility for the failures of the ArriveCAN app, but still continued to support its use. In these ways, there are clear differences of the discourses of the public, the Conservative Party, and the CBSA Union versus the government.

The public also believed that the government was tracking and controlling their movements and wanted to continue to track their medical history (Benn, 2022). This allowed the government to have access to the public’s personal/health information, just as they had it when the public used ArriveCAN. This information was presented at the border through the use of ArriveCAN, and from this information, CBSA officers determined whether or not the traveller met the requirements to travel. In this sense, the app acted as a form of health/mobility

governance at ports of entry due to the information that was inputted into the app. The public was instructed to input their personal and private information into the app, which then determined whether they were allowed to travel or not, and due to this, the app was governing the public's health/mobility at ports of entry. The app also restricted traveller mobility because it contained information that could stop an individual from travelling depending on whether or not they followed the travel rules and restrictions. Since the app had glitches and it was instructing people to quarantine when they did not need to shows that the app had a "mind of its own" and was controlling the mobility of travellers through unknown or unintended criteria as well. Specifically, CBSA officers would use the information of travellers within the ArriveCAN app to determine whether or not an individual is allowed to travel, but due to the glitches, the app was making these determinations on its own. In these ways, the app was seen as a form of health/mobility governance on the public. As the government pointed out, the ArriveCAN app was used to track and control COVID-19 (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b), but it also tracked and controlled the public because it carried the public's information and used it when they were travelling, which can be seen as a form of mobility governance as well.

## **Discussion**

The sources that were analyzed in this study, which were newspaper articles, parliamentary committee hearing testimony, the House of Commons Hansard, public information, and CBSA Union comments, resulted in four themes surrounding the construction of the ArriveCAN app. The four themes, which were cost, app usage, public privacy, and 'scrap the app,' provided insight into differing discourses relating to the app.

The theme of cost, actual and inconvenience to the public, contributed to the different discourses between the government and the public (as well as other social actors). These

different discourses surrounding the ArriveCAN app were clear because the government insisted on the continuation of the app, while the public, the Conservative Party, CBSA officers, and the NDP Party no longer supported it. Specifically, the government pointed out that the ArriveCAN app was necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep the public safe, which is why they continued to support the app and its expenses (Toronto Star, 2022f). The public believed that the \$54 million cost of the app was absurd (Curry, 2022a), and if it could be recreated quicker and cheaper by Lazer Technologies, then why couldn't the government do the same? (Toronto Star, 2022a). The government reached out to GC Strategies to develop the app, and GC Strategies subcontracted several other companies to build the app, but the government did not keep a proper record of the costs or companies that worked on the app, as stated by the Auditor General (House of Commons Canada, 2024a, p. 1). This led to issues of transparency on the part of the government because they did not keep records of the costs of companies and were not clear with the public about these things either.

Many businesses, including tourism, travel, trade, and the economy in general, were struggling because ArriveCAN and the restrictions during the pandemic drove people away and hindered people from travelling to Canada and using the app. This impacted many businesses and, consequently, the economy (Toronto Star, 2022b). People outside of Canada were driven away due to the chaos of the ArriveCAN app and the restrictions, and people within Canada were fighting to put an end to the app to help the economy and allow businesses to flourish again. Not only did the actual cost of the app impact the public, but the cost to the public in terms of inconveniences due to the app was significant. The public struggled with many hassles, such as delays, lineups, bottlenecks, and flight cancellations due to the chaos of the ArriveCAN app, yet the government continued to praise the app. As the government continued to support and

defend the app, and the public, the Conservative Party, CBSA officers, and the NDP Party continued to criticize the app, divergence in discourses surrounding the app could be readily documented.

The theme of app usage contributed to the uses of the ArriveCAN app and what it was made for. It was used to input personal, travel, and health information for travellers who crossed at a port of entry to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep the public safe, as stated by the government (Toronto Star, 2022e). Since travellers were coerced to fill out their private information into the app, and from the information in the app, CBSA officers would determine whether or not a traveller was allowed to travel based on the restrictions and requirements for travel, the app acted as a form of health/mobility governance. In this sense, the app would control and restrict whether or not a traveller was allowed to travel based on the requirements of travel during the pandemic. The differing discourses between the government and the public persisted, with the government supporting the app and the public and other social actors questioning its use and why it was made in the first place. This was because the public may have supported the idea behind the creation of the app, which was to stop the spread of COVID-19, but as the pandemic continued, the public became wary about its use because they believed it was no longer needed and was causing chaos at ports of entry. The government's transparency with the app was problematic as well because GC Strategies was contracted by the government to develop ArriveCAN, but the company subcontracted other companies for the app's development (Toronto Star, 2023). These factors demonstrate the differing discourses between the government and the public. During the pandemic, the use of ArriveCAN was mandatory for all travellers, but it is now a voluntary option for travellers to use for customs and immigration declarations (Toronto Star, 2022f). Even though it is a voluntary option nowadays, the

government wanted to make the ArriveCAN app a permanent feature at ports of entry for the digitization of the border (The Winnipeg Sun, 2022). These different facts show that there were/are purposes for the ArriveCAN app beyond its uses during COVID-19.

The theme of public privacy also contributed to the differing discourses between the government and the public and other social actors. The public believed that the ArriveCAN app was an invasion of their privacy because it collected personal and private information, but the government believed that the app did not invade the public's privacy because the app and the information collected were needed to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep the public safe (Wylie, 2022). The Office of the Privacy Commissioner stated that the ArriveCAN app only breached the public's privacy rights when erroneous messages to quarantine were sent to travellers, but other than that, the app did not breach privacy rights (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023a). The public still felt that their privacy was jeopardized with the use of the app, especially because of the penalties that came with not using the app. Travellers were fined or forced to quarantine if they did not use the app (Artuso, 2022), yet the government still continued to praise the app. The app was also considered ageist because senior citizens were unable to figure out the app or needed someone else's help to fill out their personal/private information into the app (Toronto Star, 2022d). As such, this was seen as a breach of the senior citizen's privacy as well (Toronto Star, 2022d). Not only did the public believe that their privacy rights were infringed, but they also believed that their human rights were breached as well (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b). This was because the public stated that their human rights from the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* were violated due to the personal/private information collected by the app, the penalties, the restrictions, and more (Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, 2022b). In these ways, it can be seen how different the discourses were

between the government and the public surrounding their privacy and human rights in relation to the ArriveCAN app.

The theme of ‘scrap the app’ contributed to differing discourses between the government and the public as well. This was because it comprised the first three themes and was a standalone theme as well. The government continued its support for the ArriveCAN app while the public, the Conservative Party, CBSA Union, and the NDP Party wanted to ‘scrap the app’ due to its cost, app usage, privacy issues, and more. More specifically, the costs of the app (actual and inconveniences to the public), the fact that the government wanted to make the app permanent and was not transparent about the companies involved in its development, and the privacy issues raised by the public about the app were all reasons that the public and other social actors wanted to ‘scrap the app.’ Along with these factors, the public was furious that the government was not taking accountability for the app’s failures, and from these different facts, the different discourses between the government and the public can be seen once again. Since travellers were forced to fill out their personal/private information into the ArriveCAN app and the app held the information with which CBSA officers would determine whether or not a traveller could travel based on the requirements of travel during COVID-19, the app acted as a form of health/mobility governance over the public. In addition, the public believed that the government was using ArriveCAN to track and control their medical history and movements (Benn, 2022), and the government stated that the app was used to track and control COVID-19 (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023b). But essentially, it also tracked and controlled the public because their information relating to COVID-19 was within the ArriveCAN app, which meant that the government had access to the public’s private information through the ArriveCAN app.



The ArriveCAN app was developed during COVID-19 as a digitization tool to stop the spread of COVID-19. This study analyzed several sources and found four key themes. These themes of cost, app usage, public privacy, and ‘scrap the app’ show the significance of the constructions surrounding the ArriveCAN app. The government and the public have been on opposite ends in relation to the app, and the concept of governmentality by Foucault has come to light in this study, especially due to the differing discourses between these social actors. The ArriveCAN app was considered to be an efficient tool at ports of entry by the government, but the public disagreed and resented the app, which shows the difference between the discourses of the government and the public. This study demonstrates the importance of considering discourses beyond just the “official” discourses of government to develop a complete social understanding of how something like ArriveCAN is understood and constructed by various social actors beyond the state. Since the digitization and technologization of the border have been researched in the past, this study also contributes to the research related to the ArriveCAN app, which is understudied in the criminological literature.

## **Conclusion**

This study focused on the ArriveCAN app and the constructions surrounding it. According to the government, it was developed for the purposes of speeding up lines at ports of entry and keeping the public safe from COVID-19 (Wylie, 2022). Several sources, including newspaper articles, parliamentary committee hearing testimony, the House of Commons Hansard, public information, and CBSA Union comments, were analyzed in a content analysis, and from this, four key themes emerged. Cost, app usage, public privacy, and ‘scrap the app’ were the four themes that emerged from analyzing these sources. All four themes highlighted significant points relating to the ArriveCAN app, and resulted in the identification of differing

discourses between various social actors. Namely, the government unconditionally supported the app, its use, and continued use, while the public, the Conservative Party, CBSA Union, and the NDP Party wanted the app gone. These discourses were identified after content and discourse analyses were conducted. This included assigning meanings to words, concepts, themes, and language within the data (Neuendorf, 2017). Assigning meanings to these words, concepts, themes, and language allowed for a better and fuller understanding of the data that was gleaned for this study. As this study used the grounded theory approach – because anything that has been established is a theory (Creswell, 2017) - governmentality was another concept that was used for this study. Governmentality was used to understand the different discourses and constructions of the ArriveCAN app because it encompasses security, population, and government (Foucault, 1991). These factors form governmentality and focus on how certain events, forces, and authorities problematize people's conduct (Lalonde, 2019). It focuses on people's specific actions and non-actions to meet the goals of the government (Lalonde, 2019). In this way, the government governs the public and governmentality also focuses on two notions, which are discipline and punishment (Foucault, 1977). Discipline is used on the whole population, while punishment is used on individuals (Foucault, 1977). As Foucault (1991) pointed out, past governments, which were archaic and sovereign with a King, focused on punishments for the individuals who confronted the King's sovereign power in order to reassert the sovereignty. This relates to today's Canadian government in relation to the ArriveCAN app because they penalized individuals with fines or forced quarantines as a way to 'punish' individuals for denying the use of the ArriveCAN app.

The differing discourses between the government and public, the Conservative Party, CBSA Union, and the NDP Party can be seen throughout the four themes. The theme of cost

contributed to the discourses between these social actors because the government was supporting the app and its costs, while the public saw the costs of the app as a waste of money and an inconvenience in terms of hassles. The theme of app usage contributed to these differing discourses because the government wanted the app developed to stop the spread of COVID-19, while the public felt that it was an unnecessary measure that caused chaos at ports of entry. The theme of public privacy contributed to these discourses because the government believed that the app did not invade the public's privacy, while the public disagreed and stated that it did. The last theme of 'scrap the app' contributed to these differing discourses between the government and the public because the government wanted to continue the use of the app, no matter how concerned the public was with its costs, the uses for it, privacy issues, and more, while the public, the Conservative Party, CBSA Union, and the NDP Party wanted it destroyed.

The theme of app usage also contributed to understanding the overall uses of the ArriveCAN app. As stated previously, travellers filled out their travel, health, and personal information into the app, which was then reviewed by CBSA officers. Since the app provided the officers with travellers' information, it acted as a form of health/mobility governance and restricted their movements because the information in the app controlled whether or not a traveller was allowed to travel. This theme also contributed to an understanding of the purposes of the ArriveCAN app beyond COVID-19 because it was said to have technological capacity beyond its uses for COVID-19, which meant it could be used as a tool to further digitize the border (The Winnipeg Sun, 2022). The app went from a mandatory tool to a voluntary option to make customs and immigration declarations, and the government wanted to make it a permanent "option" at ports of entry. Given the coercive use of the app in relation to health governance during COVID-19, it remains to be seen how "optional" this app would have remained if applied

beyond health purposes. Since the ArriveCAN app could be/is used as a tool to digitize the border further and make it more efficient in this way, it can be seen as a digitized border security measure.

While the theme of app usage contributed to these factors, ‘scrap the app’ contributed to every factor that the other themes talked about and highlighted some factors on its own as well. The themes of cost, app usage, and public privacy are encompassed within the theme of ‘scrap the app,’ and it is a standalone theme as well. Since the other themes are encompassed within ‘scrap the app,’ this theme contributed to every factor pointed out in those themes, such as the differing discourses, the uses of the ArriveCAN app, why the app is still used today, health/mobility governance, the digitization of the border, and the purposes beyond COVID-19, and it highlighted some factors on its own, such as the tracking and controlling of individual movement and medical history, which is also seen as a form of mobility governance.

This study analyzed several sources related to the ArriveCAN app and the constructions surrounding it, but had a limitation in terms of the sources that were used. As mentioned in the reflexivity section of this study, an Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) request was made for this study to analyze the data that was kept by the CBSA. Unpublished data about ArriveCAN was requested, and this request could have been beneficial for the data production for this study. Unfortunately, the CBSA team for this request did not deliver the data that was requested, which hindered the results of this study. Depending on the data that was found through the request, and if the data from the ATIP request was delivered, then the results of the findings may have been more detailed and different because this data is data that has not been made available publicly. Since this data was not produced for this study, it was unable to be used for the findings related to the ArriveCAN app, which decreased the amount and details of the

data that was produced. This lack of data also led to a lack of triangulation because even though a variety of different sources were used for the results of this study, the data from an ATIP request would have reaffirmed these findings and conveyed an even better understanding of the research questions that this study sought to answer as well as the findings that emerged from the sources. Furthermore, a limitation of this study is that it is not generalizable to the entire population of Canada. While this study has indicated how the “public” constructed the app, it was limited in drawing these conclusions from news media sources. It is recognized that it is possible that news media interviews with members of the public did not encompass all views or opinions related to the ArriveCAN app. Nonetheless, this study is indicative of general negative sentiment documented on the part of news media in relation to members of the public.

This study focused on the constructions and differing discourses in terms of governmentality surrounding the ArriveCAN app. Future research should seek to obtain data from an ATIP request to gain more detailed data about ArriveCAN and the publicly unavailable information related to it. The ways in which the government handled the app and the records relating to it will provide an even more detailed and clear understanding of the differing discourses between the government and the public. Any new findings that may result from that data surrounding the app will add to the current understanding of the ArriveCAN app and its constructions. This study sought to examine the construction of the ArriveCAN app that was used during COVID-19, and added to the interdisciplinary and criminological literature relating to the digitization of the border in relation to these constructions and uses of the ArriveCAN app.

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