

Lockington, Elliott (SPAC/PSPC)

From: Zi-Ann Lum <ziann.lum@huffpost.com>
Sent: October 16, 2020 9:02 PM
To: fitz-morris, James (SPAC/PSPC)
Subject: Re: Correction, please

Hi,

Didn't mean to be a nuisance with the website flag. I asked my colleagues in different parts of the country to check as well. They had the same message pop up.

Thank you for clarifying the statement that was provided to me. Would it be OK to attribute to you as the minister's director of communications? I'd like to get your clarifying lines in ASAP.

- Zi-Ann

On Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 8:08 PM fitz-morris, James (SPAC/PSPC) <james.fitz-morris@canada.ca> wrote:

Hi there,

First, the story still makes no mention whatsoever that nearly all of these contracts have since been posted. I check that site regularly from my laptop and phones and haven't encountered a problem – that said, I will flag to my IT dept.

For you clarification – virtually all of the past contracts have already been disclosed and are listed both on our website and also on the open government site.

The few exceptions are limited to 3 specific commodities that, as the website says: Given the intense competition for PPE and other supplies, and in the interests of Canadians, PSPC must protect the names of suppliers for certain commodities that are difficult to procure, including N95 respirators, gloves and swabs.

James

From: Zi-Ann Lum [mailto:ziann.lum@huffpost.com]
Sent: October 16, 2020 4:45 PM
To: fitz-morris, James (SPAC/PSPC) <james.fitz-morris@canada.ca>
Subject: Re: Correction, please

Hi James,

Thanks for your message. I tried calling you for clarification on some of the data points you mentioned. Are the 32 being withheld because a NSE was invoked?

I shared the memo with the deputy minister in my request for comment last week. It was subsequently transferred to the media relations team. It stated a "vast majority of contracts PSPC has put in place have included a National Security Exemption." I thought "at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic" time peg was clear, but I can see how your reading of the first two lines can be interpreted that way. It has been updated to past tense clarity.

Here's my request for clarification: Regarding that response provided to me by the department (re: "...we are now disclosing the majority of our COVID-19 contracting information on our web page as well as through normal proactive disclosure requirements) -- does that specifically mean new contracts going forward? Have the details of those early contracts alluded to in the May memo all been proactively disclosed?

Sidebar: I had a heck of a time opening that website on different devices. Heads up that if you're sending that link out, a lot of people will be unable to access it. I got several "This site uses an outdated security configuration" warnings.

I'm at 343-996-2251 if you prefer phone.

- Zi-Ann

On Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 3:13 PM fitz-morris, James (SPAC/PSPC) <james.fitz-morris@canada.ca> wrote:

Hi Zi-Ann,

Saw your story regarding contract disclosure and have very serious concerns that it doesn't accurately portray the facts.

Your first two lines are in the present tense and indicate that the government continues to withhold the contracts in question.

In fact, as was pointed out in the response the Department provided to you:

“However, the procurement environment has since evolved [since the time that memo was written]. In line with this new reality, and consistent with our commitment to transparency, we are now disclosing the majority of our COVID-19 contracting information on our [web page](#) as well as through normal proactive disclosure requirements. In limited cases, certain contract details cannot be disclosed, for example to protect commercial confidentiality of suppliers. “

The website mentioned about is this one: <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/comm/aic-scr/contrats-contracts-eng.html>

On it, you will see that, of the 244 COVID-19 response related contracts we have signed, the names of only 32 are being withheld in order to protect supply chains. In all but two of those cases, the commodity and contract value are disclosed.

I’m not going to provide links to all of the individual entries, but these contracts have been proactively disclosed on the open government website. The vast majority are listed under PHAC as it is the agency that requested them.

I must also take issue with referring to Mr. McKinnon’s one response as “vague.” Without debating the validity of editorializing about that one response, this is an issue the Minister and the Deputy Minister have spoken to a number of times before in interviews, committee hearings, and in the House. We have been very clear about this issue for months.

Thank you,

James

James Fitz-Morris

Directeur des communications / Director of Communications

Cabinet de la ministre des Services publics et de l’Approvisionnement / Office of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement

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