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—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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• (1600)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC)):
Welcome, everybody.

I'm Peter Van Loan. I'm not normally the chair of this committee; however, Hedy Fry, the chair, is not here, so as vice-chair, I will be sitting in.

Due to the earlier proceedings in the House, we will be somewhat abbreviated, starting now at four o'clock instead of 3:30. That gives us an hour and a half, so we will go through two 45-minute segments. The witnesses will have 10 minutes, and then we'll go through the rounds of questions.

We'll get right into it. In our first panel we have, from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Bruce Clemenger and Julia Beazley.

From the National Congress of Chinese Canadians, we have Frank Huang.

I will start with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Bruce Clemenger (President, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to participate in this study on systemic racism and religious discrimination.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is a national association of evangelical Christians, which was established in 1964 to provide a national forum for leaders of churches and institutions for Canada's four million evangelicals and to be a constructive voice for biblical principles and life in society.

Evangelicals are one of the most ethnically diverse religious communities in Canada, and while some of our community members experience the intersection of racism and religious discrimination, our submission to the committee will focus on religious discrimination.

Rarely does a parliamentary committee address issues of religion, and we suggest there should be more opportunity to engage in such conversations. This committee's study is particularly significant for this reason, and because all freedoms thrive when religious freedom thrives and is respected and protected, this study is important.

Canada is a nation of deep religious pluralism and of deep differences. This is a strength and a challenge, so part of the importance of the study is to examine how we foster a society of tolerance and respect, and work together to build a society in which freedom and justice flourish. This study is also critical in light of an increasing anti-religious climate in Canada. This climate includes a devaluing, misunderstanding, and increasing fear of religion and a belief that religion should be privatized and kept out of the public square.

Anti-religious sentiment, misinformation, and misunderstanding lead to marginalization and discrimination. This discrimination is manifest in disturbing attacks and incidents directed at religious communities, such as the horrific attack against Muslims earlier this year, in the rising percentage of hate crimes motivated by hatred of religion, and also in more subtle ways that marginalize and discriminate. Given the rise in hate crimes against the Muslim community, it's appropriate that a special focus be given to the protection of this community.

In Canada evangelicals are less often the target of hate crimes than are other religious groups. This may be in part because evangelicals don't tend to be visibly distinctive. Our faith and our practice do not mandate the wearing of particular religious symbols or clothing, yet evangelicals are more supportive of the wearing of religious symbols and clothing than are most Canadians. We do, however, experience anti-religious sentiment and underlying religious discrimination in response to our beliefs and practices.

I, as an evangelical, know that my beliefs are blasphemy or heresy to some and utter nonsense to others. When others denigrate my beliefs or swear using the name of Jesus, who is my Lord, it hurts, yet I'm also commanded to turn the other cheek, to love my enemies, and to go the extra mile. Love includes rebuke, but only if done with love and not hate.

There is, however, a vulnerability if power and influence are tied to the ability to shame and belittle. Whatever the nature of the marginalization, the discrimination, or the motivations of hatred, how the government responds to this trend and the tone it sets is important.

More detailed comments can be found in our brief. We'd like to spend our remaining time here outlining some of our recommendations. We have four high-level recommendations, each with several sub-recommendations.

Ms. Julia Beazley (Director, Public Policy, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada): Our first recommendation for a whole-of-government approach is to take religious differences seriously. There are a number of ways to do this.

Study systemic racism and religious discrimination independently, and study their intersectionality. Race, religion, and culture are distinct, and yet they overlap. It is important to understand them discretely as well as how they intersect.

The government should make a sustained and transparent commitment to freedom of religion and to upholding it specifically rather than letting it be subsumed under the more general category of human rights.

Allow religious groups and religious adherents to hold their beliefs and to practise their faith without marginalization or penalty for doing so. This is a charter guarantee, but it is fleshed out in legislation, regulations, and policy. There will be pressure for governments to withhold services or benefits from individuals or organizations who dissent from common beliefs or who are out of step with mainstream attitudes. The government's task is to ensure that all are treated fairly and equitably. We need to have a robust conversation in Canada about whether government or government agencies should penalize individuals or institutions for beliefs or practices that are otherwise legal. Examples would include the ongoing debate over accreditation of Trinity Western's law school and over the wearing of the niqab in Quebec.

We shouldn't minimize differences of religious belief, because significant differences do exist. When we work together as multi-faith groups on issues of common concern, we each approach the initiative out of our own religious perspective. We find consensus for collaborative action drawn from the resources of our respective faiths. Tolerance and respect, for example, for evangelicals are not secular values. They are principles taught by our faith. This is true of other faiths as well.

Allow faith groups to bring their perspective to bear in public debate. This is an important part of what it means to be a free and democratic society. Government should not compel or coerce Canadians to act against their beliefs or to celebrate beliefs that are counter to their faith. We recommend that robust conscience protection be legislated so that no one is forced to act against their conscience or deeply held beliefs.

Pursue legislation that protects religious belief and practice. One example of legislation that provides this kind of protection is section 176 of the Criminal Code. This section should not be deleted, as Bill C-51 proposes, but rather maintained and amended to clearly protect all faith groups.

Second, a whole-of-government approach means engaging with religious groups directly. We encourage you, as parliamentarians, to make an effort to engage with faith communities directly and to listen to their perspective. You will find many points of consensus, and on many issues you will find them to be co-labourers. Consider establishing a forum for dialogue and co-operation to help foster relationships, improve co-operation, and dispel the stereotypes that cause misunderstandings. This might take the form of an annual

dialogue between parliamentarians, ministers, and faith leaders, or establishing a multi-faith advisory group or council.

Encourage departments and ministers to seek advice and input on areas that intersect with religious beliefs in Canada from the faith groups who are involved in the policy arena. Recognize the breadth of these overlapping spheres of engagement, for example, caring for seniors, child and youth advocacy, refugee settlement, and caring for those experiencing poverty or homelessness, just to name a few. People who regularly attend religious services tend to be more generous in time and money to charitable causes. Regular worship service attendees are the backbone of charitable service. One task of a multi-faith council could be to advise on a range of issues.

Party leaders and representatives of government must model and promote respect. It is inappropriate to belittle or deride the beliefs of others. They should regularly meet with representatives of faith communities to help foster greater understanding and respect.

● (1605)

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: Third, a whole-of-government approach protects free and informed dialogue. Parliament should find ways to initiate a sustained conversation on differences and accommodation in a pluralist society. Parliament should affirm a robust commitment to freedom of speech. Deep pluralism can be messy. It challenges each of us, and we need to find ways to foster and model civility.

Don't silence critique. You have already heard significant concerns that the term "Islamophobia" moves beyond the protection of people to preclude critique of the teaching of religious doctrine and ideas. Religious freedom in Canada protects the freedom of individuals and groups to believe and to express those beliefs. It does not protect the beliefs themselves. You have heard of some jurisdictions that use the language of anti-indigenous hate, anti-black hate, and anti-Semitism. We recommend that you use the language of anti-Muslim hatred to address incidents against people of Muslim faith.

Given the use of the term Islamophobia in M-103 and in public discourse, the committee should define it clearly and narrowly, but we do not recommend its use for the whole of government. We reference in our brief some examples of clear and careful definitions of anti-Semitism.

Finally, collect data consistently and uniformly. Develop uniform national standards on collecting, categorizing, and reporting hate crime data to help ensure consistency across the country. This would provide a consistent body of information to inform dialogue and policy-making. Statistics Canada and other government departments should consult with faith communities in developing data collection. Likewise, faith communities need to be more aware of definitions and reporting protocols.

Recognize the benefits and relevance of religion to public life. Study its impact. Do not treat religions as irrelevant to or separable from public life. Collect data on the impact of religion and the social participation of those who are religious.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): Thank you very much.

We will now turn to the National Congress of Chinese Canadians.

Mr. Huang, you have 10 minutes.

Mr. Frank Huang (National Secretary-General, National Congress of Chinese Canadians): Honourable Chair and all members of the committee, good afternoon. Thank you so much for inviting me to appear before the committee.

My name is Frank Huang. I'm the national secretary-general of the National Congress of Chinese Canadians. I have been working in ethnic media since I immigrated to Canada in 2001. I used to work with Radio Canada International as a correspondent. I worked with the Global Chinese Press as an editor-in-chief, and I was a founder of New Leaf Media Inc. and the Canada Today Media Group. I'm also a commentator for Fairchild TV, OMNI TV, and Fairchild Radio. In 2005 I was one of the recipients of the Jack Webster Awards. I'm now the principal of D & H College as well as director for the Asian Art Museum of Greater Vancouver.

Thanks to the Canadian multicultural policy, as an immigrant I'm proud of our heritage in Canada. In our new home, we can feel free to speak our mother tongue even before the committee here in the House of Commons.

Next, I would like to speak in Mandarin, as a witness in the committee.

[Witness speaks in Mandarin with Interpretation, as follows:]

Mr. Chair, all members of the committee, today the topic of discussion is systemic racism and religious discrimination. Although Canada is one of the strongest countries in the world in pursuing racial harmony and religious equality, in reality there are many cases of racism and religious discrimination. Some of them are explicit, but more are implicit. I believe one root cause is that people of different religions lack understanding and awareness of other religions, so they have prejudices and biases deep in their hearts. I would like to give a few examples based on my own experience.

First is my own example. Many years ago, when I was studying in Europe, one day I saw a black guy and a white girl kissing in a Paris subway. At that time I felt really uncomfortable. I had always believed in racial equality and I don't think I have any discrimination for any people, but why did I feel so uncomfortable? After some soul searching, I found that actually deep in my heart I had some implicit

discrimination against certain races. Maybe I wasn't even aware of that, but I think the reason is that I didn't know much about people of African origin. I never had the opportunity to interact with them. Later on, in my college there were lots of black people, so I had the opportunity to work with them and do projects with them, and I got to know them much better. Now when I see such a situation, I don't feel any discomfort anymore.

The second example is in Vancouver. At D & H College where I work, there is a TESOL certificate course for training English teachers. Last year we trained a batch of Chinese teachers. For their internship we arranged for them to teach basic English to Syrian refugees arriving in Canada. In the beginning, the Chinese teachers and staff at the college had some reservations and hesitations. In the first few days they felt very scared, particularly some of the young female teachers, when facing Muslim adults on their own. However, as the course went on, the Chinese teachers and Syrian refugees quickly got to know more about each other, and some of them even became friends. In the classroom there was no tension anymore, but lots of joy and laughter. Quickly, the Chinese teachers and the Muslim students became a tight group. Even upon graduation, some of them felt that they didn't want to leave each other.

This example told us that in the Chinese community there are indeed some sentiments of terror toward the Muslim community, but this kind of sentiment is due to a lack of understanding. Once they get to know each other, it's gone. So the two sides can actually learn from each other and coexist in harmony.

• (1610)

Of course, in the Chinese community there is indeed implicit discrimination at a deeper level against certain races. Nowadays, with the rapid development of social media, some incorrect and irresponsible information even fuels this kind of discrimination.

My third example was actually from last month. In the Chinese online community, there was sensational news. A social media WeChat account with the name T*T TD Canada Trust posted the following information: "I received at least 20 refugees to open bank accounts today. I just learned that the government gave each of them \$800 every month and this family has four adults and six children, that means \$8,000 per month and they don't even need to pay tax. So after tax, \$8,000 a month means \$200,000 per year." This was posted by somebody who says that he's a TD Bank staff member working in Montreal. This news triggered intense responses in the Chinese community and was re-posted many times. It triggered backlash and outcry against the Chinese government and even the prime minister. These kinds of irresponsible words incite hostile sentiments towards refugees.

Personally, I believe this kind of discrimination is due to a lack of understanding and deep-rooted prejudice. To get over this kind of discrimination, we need to strengthen communication and education.

Therefore, I would like to propose, first, that we resume the ministry of multiculturalism of the federal government. Therefore, the government can take the lead to coordinate and push forward the construction of multiculturalism.

Second, led by the federal government, they should also push for the provincial and municipal governments to check whether there is racism or religious discrimination in their laws and regulations, in which case they should abolish them immediately.

Third, we should have a hotline service to accept the reports and complaints of all nationalities against this racism or religious discrimination.

Fourth, we should have special working groups to pay attention to social media, particularly to irresponsible and misleading comments, in which case we should have in-time correction.

Fifth, there should be more funds allocated to sponsor and encourage communities to have more dialogue and communication among different nationalities.

Finally, we should also have positive education and information sharing among the media, the universities, and the communities so that the national citizens may better understand the importance of multiculturalism to Canada.

That's what I would like to share with you. I thank you for this opportunity to share my understanding with you.

Thank you to all the committee members here.

• (1615)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): Thank you very much Mr. Huang.

We will now go to rounds of questions and answers for seven minutes, and each round is allocated to a party.

We will start with the Liberal Party and Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you very much to both groups for very interesting presentations.

First, I want to be clear as to what we are studying. It's a motion from MP Iqra Khalid, and I just want to read what the motion actually says:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear; (b) condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination and—

Further on, the motion states that the government should:

—develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination—

Those were the words that were voted on in the House of Commons. The sponsors of this motion have received all sorts of threats in response, pending this motion. They've received insults. They've been intimidated, both in their parliamentary offices and in their home offices in their ridings.

My own riding has received calls saying that this is the thin edge of the wedge to a reduction of freedom of speech and to the bringing in of sharia law. Let me say, as one member of this Liberal caucus, that we would never vote for or endorse anything that reduces freedom of speech.

I'll start my questions with Mr. Clemenger and Julia Beazley.

Where do you think this all originates? Why was there such a negative reaction to the words I've just spoken? The words are clearly innocuous, and yet there was a huge negative reaction. I'll ask both of you, and maybe you can begin, Mr. Clemenger.

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: In many ways, I think the motion has, and I hate to use the analogy, picked a scab. Again, we're a deeply pluralistic society, so we have deep religious differences and people of faith and no faith. I think part of it is that some Canadians were concerned. Would the government be playing favourites? Would the government be focusing on one faith group rather than others? As I said in our comments, given the significant increases in hate crimes against Muslims, I think it's legitimate to single out Islam or Muslims in the conversation. Again, the motion does extend to others. I think that's part of it.

I think the term "Islamophobia" raised a lot of concerns. As I said in my comments, usually we use the language of anti-black, anti-indigenous, anti-Semitism, yet Islamophobia is different. Many people understand it to be much broader. In Canada, under protection of religious freedom under the charter, the charter protects the beliefs and expression of people, not the beliefs themselves. Therefore, there's a concern that using the term "Islamophobia" would extend the protection beyond what the charter protects and that you're extending a broader range of protection to people of the Muslim faith than to Christians, Sikhs, etc. I think part of it might be that.

Also, I think it goes back to the point underlying our submission. We need to have more conversation about this less. I've been doing this a long time and I don't recall another time that a committee has actually dealt with issues of religious discrimination or even religion. It's very rare. This is the house of the people, so it is a place to have those conversations. Perhaps if it was more regular, then people would not be so surprised or anxious that the issue has surfaced.

• (1620)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Okay.

Mr. Huang, would you like to comment?

Mr. Frank Huang (Interpretation): Just like I mentioned, maybe people show their opposition against this motion. I know some Canadian Chinese that were against the root of it because they don't know much about Islam and about Muslims. They don't have an understanding at all. They don't know what they advocate, but they realize that this culture is different from theirs. They have different races and they have different dress codes.... They are hot.... They are against that.

I think the key is to let people understand each other. People should have an opportunity to get to know each other. Only in this way can they get rid of this fright. That is to say that the government, the NGOs, and the media should work together to promote communication among different cultures. It's just like what I experienced. Once you know each other, you don't feel frightened and you don't feel scared. Currently, people don't know each other very well. Against that kind of a circumstance, we have this obsession. We are against each other.

Thank you.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you very much.

Julia Beazley, would you like to add something?

Ms. Julia Beazley: I think part of what happened from the get-go was that there was some very irresponsible reporting on the motion, such as mis-characterizing what it was, what it could do, and what it set out to do, so we actually spent a great deal of time and energy educating and informing our constituency about what it was. What is this motion? What does this motion seek to do? It's not legislation. Here's what it can and can't do.

Again, as Bruce said, our one concern with the motion was the use of the term "Islamophobia", but not at all with identifying that we need to, in an unqualified way, condemn hatred and discrimination towards Muslims, but that we need to be very careful with the language we use. For example, you said that there was a motion on anti-Semitism passed in Parliament a number of years ago. That was very clear because we are talking about discrimination and hatred towards Jewish people. It is not about preventing criticism of Israel or....

Sorry. My time's up.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): All right, we're on to the next round, which is the Conservatives. I believe it's Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our guests for being with us today.

I just want to follow up on that discussion of Islamophobia. Do you use the definition or do you use the term? If you do, what do you use?

• (1625)

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: No. We're again recommending that the committee use the terms "anti-Muslim hatred", "anti-Muslim discrimination", "anti-Muslim hatred, discrimination". Again, we caution you that you may need to define it for the purposes of the report since the term is out there, but not recommend its use to the whole of government, and that the government use explicit language of "anti-Muslim hatred".

Mr. David Anderson: I guess one of our problems is that we've received so many different suggestions, all the way from it should cover hurt feelings through to it doesn't matter how we define it, that somebody else outside is going to define it their way in another country and use it anyway. I don't know if you have any comments on that.

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: That's why you may want to define it, but again recommend that it not be used, and that the government be very explicit if it's dealing with anti-Muslim discrimination or hatred, then use the term.

Mr. David Anderson: Okay, I don't have much time. In Bill C-51, the provisions in section 176, you said you'd like to see them left in the legislation. Is that all you need to say about that?

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: Yes, we think it's fair to amend it, when it talks about clergy, just to make it clear. I think it's understood that clergy refers to rabbis, imams, and so on, but if it would help to make it clearer that that's what it means, then replace the language.

Mr. David Anderson: Okay, thank you.

I want to touch on something else. You talked about leadership or whatever in our country. Last week the speech that our Governor General gave came to the public, and I don't know how you say anything other than she jeopardized her neutrality in a number of areas. I don't think you can take it any other way than basically attacking and mocking a huge number of Canadians with whom she disagrees. Part of that group are people of faith. Many people were deeply offended. I heard about that at home this weekend, so I'm wondering, do we need to restrict that type of speech?

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: Restricting it, I'm not sure how you'd do that. I think it's important for public office holders, for people who represent the broader Canadian population, just as you as MPs represent your constituents, to be very judicious in their language. I think it was inappropriate, very troubling language. Hopefully, as she grows into her job, she will realize that when she makes comments, she is speaking to Canadians and she is to represent all Canadians.

The irony is that she formally is a representative of the Queen in Canada, and the Queen herself is head of the Church of England, which very much believes in the doctrine of creation. Actually, we wrote a letter to her and our suggestion, kind of falling on the tenor of our brief, was to propose a conversation. Perhaps she doesn't know us or other Canadians who, we think again, she was kind of mocking in her tone. We suggested that since we have a number of Ph.Ds in various sciences who teach in institutions that belong to EFC, that we know across Canada, people with EFC's mainstream universities, that it really would be good to have a conversation and talk with her, talk scientist to scientist, about some of the issues she was talking about.

Mr. David Anderson: I just want you to touch on this. Does it doubly concern you when leaders of our country use those types of words coming out of their mouths? Does the threat increase when it's being taken up by leaders, or should we treat it the same as everyone else's conversation?

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: No, not at all. Again, it's a matter of being an office holder and the comments that marginalize. You think, when she represents Canada, does she actually represent me? I'm not part of whoever she's speaking on behalf of, or representing, and that's part of the marginalization. That hurts and it has a tendency to exclude, not include. Again, I think it's not appropriate from someone in her position.

Mr. David Anderson: At what point, then, does that start to become systemic? If leaders are going to be that way, how careful do we need to be to avoid that from becoming systemic? At what point does it become systemic?

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: I think the way to address it is, again, as we proposed to her in terms of a conversation, a dialogue. I think it follows Mr. Huang's suggestion. We need to get to know each other better. We need to have more places of engagement. I think it's the government in terms of a whole-of-government approach. The government needs to model that by having regular deep conversations with people of a variety of faiths. We suggested some type of all-faith, interfaith, multi-faith dialogue group that government leaders regularly meet with, and begin to understand who they are, and that Canada includes these people, that the language of politicians should not be exclusive but inclusive.

Mr. David Anderson: Is that enough? I guess my question was going to be, you're talking about the importance of including faith in public policy-making. Around the world, we see the role religion plays in terms of foreign affairs and conflicts, human rights, and all those kinds of things. Do you have any suggestion about a specific tool that we might be able to recommend? Are you simply saying it's good enough to have these discussion groups and sit down, or do you have something more specific that you'd say to the government, like "Here's a tool or a specific protocol that you should use when you're setting policy, so that this is included as part of the discussion."?"

•(1630)

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: I think what would be wonderful is if they followed the idea of having a multi-faith, interfaith cluster adviser group that could then work with the government in setting up protocols.

I know religion is very divisive, hence the response to Motion M-103. I can imagine the politicians are concerned about treading lightly—they need to tread lightly—or that they're concerned about engaging in areas of religious difference and talking about religion, because it's a minefield.

If you come to the faith groups, we'll help you meander through that minefield and set up protocols. I would have assumed that people in high public office should understand the nature of the deep pluralism of Canada both culturally and religiously, and that they understand what their role is, as public office holders, in showing a deep respect for all Canadians.

Mr. David Anderson: I guess from our perspective, we'd argue that one of the places we tried to do that was the office of religious freedom in terms of foreign affairs. Thank you for the suggestion.

I'm going to wrap up because I think my time is almost gone. I'm interested in the media reaction to last week's comments. Mainstream media virtually had little comment and carried very little on this. Social media was really big, and it was very active.

Do you have any comments about the role of media in preserving religious freedom in our country over the next decade or two decades?

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): I'm going to be a party-pooper and say you'll have to save that for later, because we're out of time.

We're on to the NDP round.

Ms. Kwan, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our presenters.

Mr. Huang, I'd like to first acknowledge that it took a lot of courage for you to present your experiences and own up to your own fears. I think all of us have those internal fears, because we don't know, and sometimes that level of ignorance brings us to a place where we don't even know that we may have these kinds of sentiments within us. I think it takes a lot of courage for someone to admit that and share that in the public realm, so I appreciate that and thank you for that.

I want to get into this a bit. I think in your presentation you mentioned that there were some postings in the Chinese social media where it was suggested that refugees who come are somehow receiving \$8,000 a month.

Did I hear that correctly?

Mr. Frank Huang: Yes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Also, that spread of misinformation is creating a division within the community. Can you expand on that a little for us?

Mr. Frank Huang (Interpretation): It's a very good question. I have brought with me some documents. These are in Chinese, so I will answer in Chinese.

It was actually in October of this year. We know that in social media in the Chinese community, the prominent platform is called WeChat. There was somebody on this platform who claimed to be a TD employee from Montreal. This person uploaded a post saying that this person received at least 20 refugees to open bank accounts, and each of them receive \$800 per month, so a family of 10 receives \$8,000 per month. That's after tax. It's equivalent to \$200,000 per year before taxes. It's definitely middle-class income.

We know that this is misleading and incorrect information. However, because it is on social media, a lot of people don't know what's true and what's not true. A lot of people felt very strongly about this, so they began to repost it to spread the fake posted information, and they began to express their hostile sentiments towards refugees and the Canadian government. It's very hard to regulate social media.

Earlier in my remarks, I suggested that maybe the government should have an agency or team to keep an eye on what's going on in the social media sphere, to detect problems early on and to stop the spread of rumours and lies in the community. That's an effective way to stop this fake information and to disseminate the true facts of the government. These kinds of negative impacts can be minimized. These negative sentiments are based on lies.

•(1635)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you for that clarification. It would be astounding for a refugee family to receive \$8,000 a month from the government to the tune of \$200,000 a year. It would be important to correct these kinds of things in all communities, so that we don't end up pitting the vulnerable against the vulnerable.

To that end, by way of monitoring the spread of this kind of information, you're recommending that the government should establish some sort of team to do this monitoring and to ensure that correct information is put forward. Am I correct in that?

Mr. Frank Huang: Yes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I'm going to move on to my next area of questioning. You mentioned that there's a need for provincial and municipal governments to review their laws, policies, regulations with a lens on racial discrimination and religious discrimination. Should the federal government also have such a policy in place, so that when new legislation is being put forward, you view it through that lens in reviewing existing policies and laws?

Mr. Frank Huang (Interpretation): In previous legislation, I believe there are indeed some clauses that carry a certain sentiment of racism and racial discrimination, including some historical facts. The government needs to review these laws and regulations to make sure that none of the laws and regulations in effect today carry any such message. If they do, they should be abolished.

If any new legislation is to be promulgated, the first thing that needs to be done is to view it through the lens of racism and religious discrimination. If there are any elements of that, the law should not be passed.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: With respect to enhancing communication, breaking down misinformation, and breaking down fear, would you suggest that the best mechanism would be a national strategy against racism and religious discrimination, with the government supporting programming in collaboration with NGOs to get this work done?

Mr. Frank Huang (Interpretation): Yes, I think so. I believe multiculturalism is a critical component of the nature of Canada, so at the federal level there should be a policy and a mechanism to fight against racism and religious discrimination—without emphasis on any single religion.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): We're going to go to our last round of questions now. I believe it's Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): I want to thank all of you for coming today.

What I heard today brought to mind some testimony we had heard closer to the beginning about implicit bias and the need to confront our own bias. I believe it was the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers that talked about how you can draft your legislation as you will, but where there's discretion, there's still the opportunity for bias to operate. I believe that you've both touched a bit on that issue.

In my own community, I was talking with some people who have taken an implicit bias assessment test. It's a Harvard test to see how you can check your own biases. I was looking through the Ontario anti-racism strategic plan, and it refers to developing a professional anti-racism tool kit, specifically for detecting racism against indigenous peoples.

Taking into account all of that, what are your thoughts about the importance of developing a tool kit or means by which we can check our biases? As a federal government, is that something you think would be helpful?

I'll put that to both groups.

•(1640)

Mr. Frank Huang (Interpretation): In terms of the tool kit, I think it's probably very difficult to find the perfect or the right tool to examine people's implicit inner discrimination. Once incidents happen, this implicit sentiment becomes explicit, so we need to pay particular attention to the effects of these kinds of incidents, racial incidents, and examine these cases and see how they are related to people's implicit sentiments.

That's why I suggested the government should set up a team to keep an eye on social media and know what's going on, what's being heatedly debated in the community, and to detect any language and sentiment early on and to examine the reasons behind it, to nip it in the bud.

Ms. Julia Beazley: I think you would be challenged to come up with a tool kit that could possibly identify all racial and religious biases, but I like the idea of being very intentional about ensuring that, as legislators, as government, as policy-makers, you're aware of your biases. We talk about that a little bit in our brief. The state's job is to be non-sectarian and to recognize its biases—they're inevitable to some extent, but to be mindful of them and start to recognize where they are.

If there were a way to develop that kind of a mechanism to help sort of go through that process—where are our biases, where are they showing, and how can we address that—I think that would be a really valuable exercise. I don't know if I have any ideas of how that might be done.

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: In some ways when I've been thinking about this in the last few months, I've asked myself if there are two solitudes in a different way from how the term was originally used: people of deep religious conviction and government and how the two intersect. We don't have a minister of religion. Would it be helpful to have an office or a council, as we're suggesting, a robust council, which has interaction with the government and groups?

But again, going back to Mr. Huang, I think he's right. A lot of it is interaction on the ground. If the government can help facilitate that, fine, but I think a lot of it is on the backs of regular Canadian citizens. We engage, and we've been 25 years involved in an interfaith coalition of Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus, so part of it is not only doing it but also letting other people know it's there.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I understand you are saying that the differentiation is more—and both of you, in fact, have raised it—different ways of bringing people together to learn more about one another and talk to one another. The implicit bias assessment test that I was talking about, which Harvard has developed, is more about a chance for people to take some reflection about their own. It's actually pretty neat because it also times how long it takes to answer questions as part of the test. It's an interesting piece, and I was interested by this tool kit.

In any event, I have agreed to share some time with Mr. Fragiskatos, so I will turn it over to him.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): You have one minute and 40 seconds.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I'll get right to it. I'm not a regular member of this committee, but I have been following the discussion very closely.

Mr. Clemenger, in your opening remarks you did mention hate crime attacks carried out against Muslim Canadians. You would acknowledge that there has been an increase in that regard, a very large-scale increase according to Statistics Canada—253% is the number it has come up with when comparing the number of hate crime attacks carried out in 2012 as compared to 2015. Do you acknowledge this?

• (1645)

Mr. Bruce Clemenger: Yes. We actually were in a number of multi-faith coalitions that involved Muslim imams. We had regular communication with them and we worked together closely. We not only know the stats, but also we engage with Muslims in Canada.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: To my way of thinking—and this reflects also what I'm hearing in my community in London, Ontario, not only from Londoners who practise Islam but beyond that—when we have a group of Canadians that is facing this kind of situation, I think it makes a great deal of sense for a motion to be brought forward, as it was, and for a committee here to study the situation, to get to the bottom of exactly what is driving this. I would love to chat more, but I think I have probably 45 seconds.

Mr. Huang, thank you very much for your testimony.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): Your time is almost up. You have about 10 seconds.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Ten seconds.

The number of studies that have been done on discrimination faced by Chinese Canadians I think have led to a situation where an improved outcome has come to bear.

Would you agree with that in terms of government studies?

Mr. Frank Huang (Interpretation): I did not really think about that, or I do not have a lot of statistics to prove what you have just mentioned.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): I thank the witnesses very much for coming today.

You are welcome to stick around to hear the next witnesses that we have.

If I could ask them to come forward now, we'll try to move quickly due to the limited time.

We have Ali Rizvi, author; and Mr. David Zackrias, head of diversity and race relations for the Ottawa Police Service.

Thank you very much.

We will first hear from Mr. Rizvi, who I understand is an author.

You have 10 minutes, starting now.

Dr. Ali Rizvi (Author, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair and respected members of Parliament, for inviting me here today to speak to the committee. I should start by saying that I from the riding that elected the honourable Iqra Khalid, who proposed Motion M-103 to Parliament. I voted Liberal, and specifically voted for Ms. Khalid.

While I am still aligned with the Liberal Party on most issues and would likely vote the same way again today, I do want to point out some areas of disagreement that I have regarding Motion M-103.

On the evening of January 29 this year, we were shocked by the news of a horrific terrorist attack on the Islamic cultural centre of Quebec City. Six Muslim worshippers were murdered in cold blood, and 19 others were injured. The suspect was a young student, now known to have had anti-Muslim views, who claimed to have been inspired by far right nationalism and leaders like Marine Le Pen. This terrorist attack, as of today, has a higher death count than any of the Islamic terrorist attacks that have ever taken place in Canada. For Motion M-103 to have been passed in the aftermath of the Quebec City attack is understandable, with well-placed intentions.

I am part of a Muslim family, and I grew up in several Muslim-majority countries, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, before immigrating to Canada in my twenties. Even though I am an atheist, I still get called “jihadist” and “dirty Muslim” online, and I'm frequently told to go back to my country. In the past few years, anti-Muslim sentiment has risen dramatically. Why?

First, people around the world following current events have seen on their TV screens numerous attacks in Paris, Brussels, Nice, Orlando, London, New York, San Bernardino, Ottawa, Edmonton, and more, perpetrated by men yelling, “*allahu akbar*”, and in most cases, pledging allegiance to the Islamic State, which uses a particularly literal and severe interpretation of Islamic scripture to justify its actions.

Second, many far right, and sadly, even mainstream right politicians around the world have exploited the resulting concerns and fears that many westerners have to drum up anti-Muslim sentiment even more. This has manifested itself in several ways, from the harassment of women who wear the head scarf, or the hijab, to the targeting of Sikhs just because a number of them wear beards and turbans, and at it's deadliest, of course, the attack in Quebec City.

In light of all this, having a motion like M-103 makes sense, but then, why is it so controversial? Why doesn't it have more support from the opposition? This is what I want to talk to you about today. I want to show you how one small tweak to the motion would retain 100% of its meaning and objectives, while also garnering much more support from those critics who are resisting it today.

I just told you about the anti-Muslim hate I have experienced because of my name, my Muslim family, and my country of birth, but there is a flip side. As an atheist, as someone who decided, much like a lapsed Catholic or secular Jew, to align with reason and science and shun supernatural claims and ancient texts like many of the western enlightenment thinkers did, I am an apostate of Islam. For every tweet from a white nationalist telling me, “Go back to where you came from, you dirty terrorist”, I also receive messages from religious people in those countries that I come from, telling me what they will do to me, my wife, and my child in unspeakable terms if I so much as set foot in Pakistan again. Why? Because I left Islam. I am an apostate. Unfortunately, I know that they are serious.

Raif Badawi, a Saudi blogger, is imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, charged with—quote, unquote—“insulting Islam” simply for blogging about separating mosque and state. A string of Bangladeshi secular bloggers have been hacked to death in broad daylight. Asia Bibi, a Christian woman, is sitting in jail in Pakistan for committing blasphemy against Islam. Mashal Khan was beaten to death by a mob of fellow students on his university campus in Peshawar, Pakistan, earlier this year for questioning religion.

• (1650)

The people who threatened me are true to their word. It's very real. This is the no man's land I find myself in: Islamic fundamentalism on the one hand and anti-Muslim bigotry on the other. I get it from both sides. It is from this perspective that I want to present to you the difference between challenging ideas and demonizing people. This does not need to be a partisan issue. In certain leftist circles, any criticism of Islamic doctrine is seen as bigotry against all Muslims. In certain right-leaning circles the problematic aspects of Islamic doctrine are used as an excuse to blankly demonize, profile, and even ban Muslims, as we've seen proposed south of the border.

Both sides make the mistake of conflating Islam with Muslims. Islam, like any other religion, is a set of ideas in a book. Muslims, on the other hand, are human beings. Human beings have rights and are entitled to respect. Ideas, books, and beliefs don't and aren't. The right to believe what we want is sacred; the beliefs themselves aren't. Challenging ideas move societies forward; demonizing people rips societies apart. Neither side makes this crucial, key distinction. The word “Islamophobia” is an umbrella term that also conflates legitimate criticism of Islam—as is being done by many of my fellow liberals and secular activists trying to change our societies in the Muslim world—with the demonization of Muslims, which is obviously wrong. Remember, we don't use terms like “Judaismophobia”. We say, “anti-Semitism”, a term oriented around prejudice against people, not ideas. Demonizing people goes against our liberal values, but criticizing dogmatic ideas and beliefs is at the very heart of free speech, also one of our fundamental values. Criticizing Islam isn't bigotry, but singling it out for protection is and demonizing Muslims as people is. We should be wary of organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood, who have popularized the term “Islamophobia” for a very clever reason. It allows them to exploit the pain of real victims of anti-Muslim hate for the political purpose of stifling criticism of religion.

Here is my proposal regarding M-103. If the motion simply uses the term “anti-Muslim bigotry” instead of “Islamophobia”, I would back it 100%, as would many conservatives I've spoken to. It would

strip its critics of their main argument. You may argue, why make such a big deal about semantics? I would ask the same question to my audience today. If this term is preventing opposition members and critics from backing the motion, and if we truly care about the goals and purpose of this motion to help curb anti-Muslim bigotry, why not call it anti-Muslim bigotry or anti-Muslim hate or anti-Muslim sentiment? It does exactly the same thing and it doesn't take away an iota of the meaning of the motion and what we want to achieve. Yet, it also removes the barriers preventing its critics from backing it. If we liberals care about the substance of this motion over semantics we lose nothing and gain everything from making this one small change.

We are all beneficiaries of the great thinkers of the enlightenment. Today there is an enlightenment taking root in the Muslim world. We're seeing it happen all around us. Our goals should be to welcome and encourage these changes, the free exchange of ideas, both there and here, while still protecting the rights and freedoms of Canadian Muslims. We can do both.

Thank you.

• (1655)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): Thank you very much.

Now for 10 minutes we have David Zackrias, head, diversity and race relations, Ottawa Police Service.

Staff Sergeant David Zackrias (Head, Diversity and Race Relations, Ottawa Police Service): Honourable members of the standing committee, I sit before you today as a proud member of the Ottawa Police Service, but also as a visible minority. I sit before you as a father with three sons, and I'm honoured that you called me today to talk about the crucial subject of systemic racism and religious discrimination. In all these capacities, I want to see systemic racism and discriminatory barriers removed.

During my time as a staff sergeant with the Ottawa Police Service diversity and race relations section, I've personally heard from vulnerable people who were subjected to racism and discrimination based on their religion. It must end.

In November 2015, a white Caucasian woman who is a vice-principal in our local public school was viciously targeted. She woke up one morning to find numerous dog feces samples piled on her doorstep, along with the words “Go home” smeared on the sidewalk. Her only crime? She wears a hijab. In that year, we had more reports of hate crime incidents against Muslim women. The percentage doubled from the previous year, from 2014 to 2015. I've seen the fear in the eyes of the community members when attacks happen in a remote part of the world in the name of Islam, and how scared Muslims become that they will be part of the next Quebec shooting. I've heard mothers tell me that they look over their shoulder in parking lots, afraid they might be mowed down in daylight.

In November 2016, three religious sites were targeted with vandalism in Ottawa: a mosque, a synagogue, and a church with a black pastor. The offender was just 17 years old, and he pleaded guilty to inciting hatred.

In the same month, a local rabbi's personal home was pasted with hate graffiti. We have to ask ourselves how it is that despite the Holocaust, one of the biggest tragedies of our time, the Jewish community still continues to be targeted by hatred. How are we allowing this to happen in our communities?

Members of the committee, as a visible minority myself, I've witnessed a woman being accidentally run over by a taxicab early one morning. In the aftermath, I did what any police officer would do. I tried to help the victim involved and tried to take control of the scene, but in the absence of my uniform, I almost felt powerless. Bystanders didn't co-operate. They were rude and angry toward me. I firmly believe that my skin colour reduced my chances of being taken seriously and that my uniform gives me a privilege.

In closing, I can say that all of us, including police officers, have biases, and that has been proven through science. Sometimes, unwittingly, those biases translate into racism. When my dear colleague Chris Hrnchiar made comments about Inuit artist Annie Pootoogook, his comments caused immense pain. As a board member for the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, I saw first-hand the trauma that the Inuit community felt because of his comments. Working with the community and Chris, it was also an opportunity for immense healing and reconciliation. Chris is an amazing individual, but he made a mistake. He was very open to understanding and learning. I commend him, and I'm proud to work with him.

• (1700)

Your task as a committee will now be to understand what we can all do to help all Canadians be open to changing and addressing their own biases.

I am calling on you to support public awareness campaigns that are community-led, working hand in hand with law enforcement. We all have a stake in this fight to eradicate discrimination. More support is needed for initiatives that help recognize biases. Organizations like Ottawa Victim Services are charities that need support. They should receive consistent government funding to help them continue the work they are doing to support victims of crime. Legislation is needed that requires all law enforcement agencies to annually report hate crimes and trends and associated risks.

In order to address these issues, we need to diagnose what the problem is. This is a collective responsibility, and I am honoured to wear my uniform and my skin colour with pride in the hope that Canada will be free of racism and religious discrimination, a place of inclusion where my children don't experience hate. At this point in time in human evolution on the globe, it is time to recognize that diversity and building relationships is a strength we need to develop for creating a strong and peaceful future.

Honourable members of the committee, it is my hope that Canada will be seen as a peacemaker once again. Furthermore, it's my hope that law enforcement will focus on community policing. Through my work at diversity and race relations, I've had a chance to really

work hand in hand with the community. Their stories are very powerful and their lived experiences important for us to know.

Thank you for providing me a platform and voice to the community of our diverse nation. We are stronger and better when we listen to each other, understand one another, and work together.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me today. I welcome questions.

• (1705)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): Thank you very much.

We will now go into the question rounds.

The first is from the Liberals. You have seven minutes for all the questions and answers.

Ms. Dzerowicz is beginning.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and a huge thanks to both of our presenters this hour.

I have only seven minutes and lots of questions. I will start off with a series of questions for you Staff Sergeant Zackrias.

We've actually been meeting on this topic for quite a while, so we have received a number of recommendations. A lot of them have to do with police department training and definitions of hate crime. I want to bounce them off you to get a bit more information and some thoughts about what you think might be helpful to us.

One key thing that has been mentioned to us is that the collection and publication of hate crime and hate incidents data vary widely by police department, so we were encouraged to try to have one way of both defining hate and collecting the data so that there could be a comparison of apples to apples. Do you agree with that recommendation? Do you find that would be helpful?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Absolutely. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, there needs to be legislation from the federal level in terms of collecting hate incidents data and reporting and feeding it back, as well as a standardized definition.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: When we're talking about defining hate, from your perspective, what do you think needs to be clear? Is it that everybody's different elements are considered hate? Is it that there are different definitions that are not very clear? Can you be a bit more specific around what needs to be clarified within the definition of hate?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: I would defer this question to the academics, but from my standpoint, people get a bit confused in terms of the definition of hate and freedom of speech, so we need to clearly distinguish how you apply free speech to hate.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I don't want it to seem I am leading the witness, but if someone is wearing a hijab and someone makes a hateful comment, some people would say they're just being mean and awful. Would you define that as hate? Should that be part of the hate definition? I think some people would say they don't think that's within the law right now. We're actually defining graffiti on the walls of a synagogue or church as a hate crime. Do you think that needs to be clarified, or do you think that's fairly clear in the law today?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: There needs to be more clarification. Within the hate component, there needs to be other elements to prove that it's a hate crime. Having graffiti itself on its own won't stand in court.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: One of the other things we did here, as a recommendation, is to establish a national training program for police and prosecutors to educate them about the dangers of hate crime and encourage them to enforce the existing Criminal Code on hate speech.

How much training do you think exists right now? Do you think that also needs to be bolstered and enforced? Do you have any specific areas that you think we need to focus on in terms of training?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: It varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

For us here, the Ontario Police College provides hate crime training for all their recruits. Once the recruits are serving with us, once they're done their recruit training, my section provides hate crime training as well. That being said, I would like to see standardized training, that we put more investment into the resources and the content, so it's based on the national trend in Canada. We can apply that to our training.

Some of our training, from my perspective, I find is outdated. We need new literature based on what the needs are today.

• (1710)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: It sounds like it needs to be sort of refreshed as often as things are evolving within our country.

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Yes.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: In some of your recommendations, you talked about working with the community, community-led public campaigns. I think there are already quite a few initiatives between the police and different communities.

Are there specific areas that you think need to be strengthened in terms of the police relationship with different community groups? Is it that you form relationships with the religious groups, go into schools? Is it that it needs to be much broader than it is now, or do you think it's at about the right level at the moment?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: We could always do more with building that relationship.

Addressing hate crimes is a shared responsibility. We need to work with the community. The police alone can't fix this issue. The police can't take a leadership role in terms of guiding the community. It has to be led by the community and tailored by the community.

Yes, I could see more community engagement, community-led initiatives. That also requires a support for the community. There are financial implications. This is where a lot of communities fall short. I

can see the police supporting these initiatives, but it has to be led by our community members.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: One of the things we heard from community groups is that if they're going to work with police, there has to be a level of trust. To what extent is that a conversation within the police force? I think often people think we need to see a police force that reflects and understands the different communities out there.

Is that a conversation that happens within the police force now? Is there something we could do at the national level that would help encourage that because that would help build some trust?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: One of the challenges that police services in Canada are facing is public trust and confidence.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): You've run out of time, so could you just wrap it up.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: If there is anything you want to add to finish off that question, feel free to submit it to the clerk.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): For the next seven minutes, I believe it's Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): That's right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions will be for...I guess I should be saying Dr. Rizvi. Is that right?

Dr. Ali Rizvi: It is. I don't practise clinical medicine. I haven't practised since 2011, but yes.

Mr. Scott Reid: Once you get the doctorate, it's there and—

Dr. Ali Rizvi: It's forever.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's right. Even honorary ones should be trumpeted wherever possible, although I know yours is the real deal.

I want to thank you for your balanced presentation.

By way of response to your suggestions as to how to deal with this report that we'll be developing on this motion going forward, I agree 100% with your suggestion that we use terms like "anti-Muslim bigotry" in place of the term "Islamophobia".

In fact, my colleague David Anderson proposed a motion, which was voted on in the House of Commons 48 hours before the vote on M-103. It specifically recognized "the recent and senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque", and it called on the House to "condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities".

I agree with your approach. Whether we're discussing other communities or just Muslims, I think that approach is the right one.

You're aware of the fact that Motion M-103 makes reference to petition e-411. Are you aware of that fact?

Dr. Ali Rizvi: Yes, I am aware of it. I don't know a lot of the details of e-411, but I know that this is what was initially proposed in December 2016.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's right.

The House endorsed it unanimously. There were fewer than 80 members there, but I was one of those members. At the time, I was focusing on something else that I thought was important. The petition states that the vast majority of the Muslim community in Canada is peaceful and condemns violence, but it also asks the House to, as it puts it, condemn "all forms of Islamophobia". I am now worried, based on what we've heard in our hearings, that if the term "all forms of Islamophobia" is not clarified, it could be understood to mean all phenomena that anybody sees as Islamophobic, thereby expanding it so the eye of the beholder determines whether the action of a person who said or did something is Islamophobic.

Is that a legitimate fear?

• (1715)

Dr. Ali Rizvi: Yes.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, the term "Islamophobia" is very broad. It includes not just anti-Muslim bigotry and hate against Muslims, but also any criticism of Islam, the religion itself, so now we are talking about scripture: the Quran, Hadith, or what have you.

When you have that kind of situation, it goes further than just hate. It actually impinges on free speech. The important thing I want to note here is that right now it's the free speech of millions—according to polling—of secular and liberal activists, people who are fighting for free speech in Muslim countries. They get hit with this label a lot because they criticize Islamic doctrine.

One important thing to understand is that in countries where Muslims are a minority, like here in Canada, Islam is an identity. I have a Muslim identity. My family has a Muslim identity. However, in countries where Muslims are a majority, Islam has more of that religious function. It's put into action. While Muslim women here choose to wear the hijab, or head scarf, as a symbol of their identity and their belief—which we support, obviously—that same head scarf is forced onto women by their governments, their husbands, and their fathers in Iran and Saudi Arabia. Often it is here as well.

The same book that people here revere as sacred, over there is put into law and used to justify everything from the execution of apostates to the persecution of homosexuals and so on.

Mr. Scott Reid: Could I ask one very specific question?

I'm not sure if it's on Facebook. I guess it is. You've gone back and forth in a conversation with a distinguished Ahmadiyya scholar. I haven't actually read it. I've only seen your Huffington Post comments on it.

Are Ahmadiyya Muslims in a position of being accused of Islamophobia in some cases, or is the persecution they face of a different sort?

Dr. Ali Rizvi: There is sectarianism in Islam, just as there is in all the other religions. There is a tendency for some groups to label

other groups as not true Muslims. The problem is that whenever you label somebody as not true Muslim, as a blasphemer or heretic, we know from the history of all the religions the kind of fate they have suffered. Unfortunately, these people are still subjected to it in the Muslim world.

The Ahmadiyya community is also frequently labelled as non-Muslim, as blasphemers or heretics. We know from the violence against them in South Asia, mainly in Pakistan, that they are definitely a targeted community. There are many mainstream Muslims who think that they should be put to death. Again, one of the problems with the term "Islamophobia" is that, when you talk about criticism of Islam and you don't differentiate it from anti-Muslim hate, you are going into a territory that's very difficult to navigate.

Mr. Scott Reid: I have one last question in the minute I have left.

You mentioned Bill 62 in Quebec, and I just have to ask the question. I know you don't approve of the term "Islamophobia", and I think I share your view. Could that be characterized as an anti-Muslim bill, or anti-Muslim discrimination? Would that be a reasonable characterization of it?

Dr. Ali Rizvi: My view on Bill 62 is that I don't believe we should be legislating what women should or should not wear. I come from a part of the world where that happens a lot. There are many women who are forced into wearing things such as the niqab and the hijab by their families, but at the same time, I am in favour of restriction. When you have to establish identity, if you're going into a bank or government building, or testifying, then yes, establish identity. If there are security concerns, yes, we should regulate that.

We shouldn't be allowing children to walk around in burkas and niqabs, but if there are adult women who choose to do it out of their own volition.... I have a friend, a white Muslim convert, who voluntarily took it.

• (1720)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): We have to move on to the next set of questions.

Ms. Kwan, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to both of our witnesses.

Mr. Rizvi, on the point around the definition, I'm sad to say that ship has sailed for the purpose of this committee. I recall how during the debate I was desperately working across the floor between the Liberals and the Conservatives to see whether we could come to an agreement so that we could have unanimous support. As you stated, the issue at hand is far more important than disagreement with respect to the definition. There was certainly an effort made, but ultimately, I believe, the Prime Minister's Office put their foot down and the thing did not go through. So, sadly, here we are.

I have studied the motions put forward by the Conservatives and the Liberals, the one we are studying today, and I think the end goal is really to ensure that the issue of discrimination in all its forms be addressed in our Canadian society.

Moving to recommendations and issues before us, I'd like to turn my questions to Staff Sergeant Zackrias.

You mentioned something that I think the previous panel also touched on, which is an individual's own personal and hidden fears, and the discrimination within us. Sometimes we don't even see it or identify with it. With the example that you gave about the car accident, I think you were illustrating a point.

On that issue, in terms of recommendations, how can we address this effectively, with a national approach to it? You mentioned working with NGOs, being led by NGOs with respect to that. Would you say we need a national strategy across the country from government to address the issue of racial and religious discrimination, with a specific stream to provide supports and resources to NGOs to lead the process on education and awareness?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Yes, I would support that. I'm in full agreement. There's a need for a national strategy. If we don't address hate crimes and racial and religious discrimination, they could manifest and have far-reaching implications, based on what's happening around the world, for example.

Yes, we need to focus on building that awareness, as well as the education piece. The previous panel touched on the Harvard implicit bias test. I've done that test as well, and it's a great tool. It helps you to recognize your implicit biases and it also helps manage your biases. I strongly support that.

In 2016 we introduced fair and impartial police training for Ottawa police officers. It was mandatory training for all of our members. It touches on the science and theory behind human biases. From my understanding, there isn't a lot of Canadian research done in this field. We had to rely on the American research. The product itself, the fair and impartial policing training, is American based, and it is applied here. I believe Toronto Police Service is also providing this training, as well as Durham Regional Police Service and the Ottawa Police Service.

We need something at a national level, where all agencies implement this sort of training. Also, there's an element of need to push this training within the community, as community members have biases as well. It has to be done at all different levels.

• (1725)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you for that.

I'd like to turn for a moment to the victims, the people on the receiving end. Some of these issues manifest themselves and it becomes a hate crime but in others it does not. There's a lot of under-reporting. We know that already. In providing supports to the victims where they can report these things...and there are all kinds of reasons why people don't do it, I'm sad to say. For some it's mistrust of the police force. That's another reason. Do you have any recommendations as to how we can overcome this barrier, particularly with a view to ensuring that victims' voices are heard and respected? Then what mechanisms or strategies can government put in place to support the victims who are the injured parties?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Yes, a lot of communities are sometimes reluctant to come forward and report these incidents. According to Stats Canada, I believe two-thirds of hate crimes are unreported. That's a huge number, a huge gap. Again, in 2015 when that spike took place, I reached out to the entire Muslim community in Ottawa. I sent a mass email that got the media's attention and spread the message in the community. My purpose in sending that message was

to encourage the Muslim community, the impacted community, to come forward and report it.

As another piece, we need to look at options. It can't just be one platform but we see other platforms where the community can go unreported. I believe in the U.K. there are channels where community members can report these types of incidents.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Yes, community-based reporting has been suggested by other witnesses. I think the other one is the idea of having a hotline whereby people can go through a hotline, not necessarily the police system. So you support both those kinds of concepts?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Absolutely, but still we need to make sure that there is that connection between law enforcement because again public safety is paramount and if somebody is in danger, they should be contacting the police.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): Thank you very much.

We'll now do the final round of questions.

Ms. Dhillon.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Thank you.

I'd like to thank both our witnesses for being here.

Mr. Zackrias, thank you very much, first of all, for your very candid testimony and your personal experiences.

Do you feel the police are equipped to deal with hate crimes?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Hate crime is a complicated issue. Police are equipped to deal with it if a criminal offence is committed. Yes, absolutely, we will investigate it and we will prosecute it and make sure that all the steps are taken. As I said, it is a complex issue. The community has a big role in this education awareness. All those areas need to be looked at. The focus should be on prevention and intervention not on prosecution and investigation, although we need that. That's an importance piece but I think we should shift the focus to prevention and intervention and put our resources in that area. We could always do a better job.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: We heard previous witnesses mention subconscious prejudices, subconscious biases. You yourself mentioned it. Just about everybody has them. When it comes to police officers having them and they see a certain member of a community walking on the street and they'll do a "stop and frisk" and we've heard of "driving while black". Are the police being better trained now? In the past the training did not include cultural or racial sensitivity. There was more a question of stereotyping. Has that training changed?

• (1730)

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Yes. I can speak from the Ottawa Police Service perspective.

Previously we used to offer diversity training at our college, but now I take our officers to the mosque. We started doing that this year. We went to two different mosques. They got a chance to spend the day there. We went to the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, and they got a chance to learn about our indigenous peoples as well. The training has changed to meet today's needs, and also the implementation of bias...fair and impartial police training, as well. That's a different way of looking at dealing with our own biases. The Ottawa Police Service is working right now toward a multi-year action plan, which focuses on a bias-neutral policing strategy for the organization.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: What does that consist of?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: We're looking at the areas of training, policies, data collection, recruitment, retention, all different aspects of policing.

I also want to point out to the committee that within our current Ottawa Police Service business plan, we have an EDI lens. That's equity, diversity, and inclusion. It applies to our entire business plan. We apply that lens to see if it meets those three areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Can you explain EDI a little bit?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: It's a lens we have. For example, for our transfer panels, who look at the transfer of members within the organization, we provide bias-neutral training. That's one of the pieces. We provide our promotion panel as well with bias-neutral training.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Could you please provide the committee with a copy of that action plan?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: The business plan itself?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Yes, please. Can you provide that to the committee?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Absolutely. It's available online at the Ottawa Police Service—

Ms. Anju Dhillon: But we'd like you to submit it, please, to our committee.

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Sure.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Thank you so much.

I'm assuming that police officers have psychological tests before they are trained to become officers. Does one part of those tests include dealing with their own biases or prejudices?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: While going through the recruitment process, the officers do go through psychological testing. It's been 20 years since I did mine, so I can't speak to the test, but it is done through professionals.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Do you think such questions would help weed out those who have prejudices? Our jails are full of a disproport-

tionate amount of indigenous people and black people. If we could weed out those officers...because when somebody has a prejudice and they're in a position of power, this can have a devastating effect on the person who is singled out and stereotyped and arrested for whatever reason.

Do you think these psychological tests should include that?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: Absolutely. As well, we have quite a rigorous recruitment process. We do thorough background checks on applicants to see if any flags pop up during the background phase.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: What could the federal government do to help in this aspect of police training and limiting prejudices?

S/Sgt David Zackrias: We've talked about a national strategy here, about building awareness. We need to talk about these issues. We can't just discount it and say that it's happening "down south". If we don't deal with this head-on, it will manifest. We don't want to see the issues that are happening in Europe, where communities are marginalized, alienated, and segregated. What happens then?

That's where we as leaders, as government, as law enforcement need to be able to be there for those communities and prevent that alienation. We need to be proactive. We need to diagnose these issues thoroughly in order for us to prevent that, or to find the cure.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Absolutely.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): I want to thank the panel very much.

Members of the committee, thank you.

Can I have a motion to adjourn?

Yes, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I'm just wondering if on Wednesday we can take the last 15 minutes to maybe talk about the drafting of the report. It's our last meeting, right? I think the intent was that the report would be written, or at least drafted, while we were gone.

• (1735)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): There seems to be a consensus about that. That note will be reflected, and I will encourage you to take that up at the next meeting.

Do we have a motion to adjourn?

Mr. Reid makes the motion. All in favour?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Peter Van Loan): Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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