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Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon



Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (1000)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 116 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Before we begin, I would like to ask all members and other in-person participants to consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents. Please take note of the following preventative measures in place to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. Use only black, approved earpieces. The former grey earpieces must no longer be used. Keep your earpiece away from the microphone at all times. When you're not using your earpiece, place it face down on the sticker placed on the table for this purpose. Thank you all for your co-operation.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. To ensure that the meeting runs smoothly, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For members in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The committee clerk and I will manage the speaking order as well as we can, and we appreciate your understanding in this regard.

This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on August 13, the committee is meeting to study the review of the foiled terrorist plot in Toronto and of the security screening process for permanent residence and citizenship application.

I want to remind members that there is currently a section 517 publication ban in place. A section 517 publication ban prohibits the publication of any information, evidence or representations made at or in anticipation of a bail hearing. Any bail conditions, reasons of the bail court and any evidence or materials relied upon at the bail hearing are prohibited from disclosure.

I'd now like to welcome the witnesses. Appearing today, we have the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Welcome, Minister.

From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Ted Gallivan, executive vice-president, on behalf of the president. From the

Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Vanessa Lloyd, interim director. From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Shawn Tupper, deputy minister. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Bryan Larkin, deputy commissioner, specialized policing services.

For the second hour, we will have a slight change in the witnesses.

I'd now like to invite the minister to make opening remarks.

Please go ahead, sir.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Chair, thank you.

Good morning, colleagues. Thank you for being here this morning to discuss this important issue. Your chair has introduced my colleagues, senior officials who are joining me this morning. Some of us are old hands at this table, but Vanessa tells me that as our interim director of CSIS, it's her first time before this parliamentary committee.

Vanessa, welcome to this important part of our parliamentary democracy. Thank you for joining us.

As members are aware, the investigation and arrest of these individuals are the result of the efforts of Canada's national security, intelligence and law enforcement partners. At the very beginning, I would like to take the opportunity, as I have on other occasions, to commend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Canada Border Services Agency and their partners, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Toronto regional police service, the York Regional Police, the Peel Regional Police and the Durham Regional Police Service for their outstanding work together on this important case. The arrest of these two individuals is a great example of outstanding police and intelligence work.

As new information became available, our national security partners acted quickly to keep Canadians safe. While I will gladly provide the committee with as much information as possible, of course, understanding Canadians' obvious interest in answers to these many questions, we must remember that we should have these discussions in a manner that does not impair the Crown's ability to prosecute these accused persons or the police services' ability to investigate any or all of these circumstances in their judgment if they deem it to be necessary to continue those investigations.

As I said, all Canadians deserve answers and transparency. That is precisely what all of us aim to provide today. This morning I submitted to the committee a chronology of events, in English and French, that was worked on by the security agencies represented with me at the table and, of course, by our Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship colleagues as well.

Members will note that the chronology shows it was only in June of this year that CSIS became aware of the potential threat posed by these subjects. For greater precision, I was informed by CSIS on July 24 of this year, in a briefing where senior officials of the RCMP were also present, that CSIS had been assessing the threat from these individuals based on recent intelligence. Upon learning this information, CSIS took immediate measures to assess and obviously mitigate the threat.

I was assured of, and briefed on, the close surveillance of the threat, including at the appropriate time by members of the RCMP, who were positioned to act on any indicators—any indicators—of an escalating or imminent threat. As you know, these individuals were arrested on July 28 of this year and are now charged with nine serious offences, including terrorism-related offences, and are currently incarcerated, remanded into custody.

This is the way the investigative and national security system should work.

• (1005)

[Translation]

That said, an important question is how these people ended up in Canada.

Security screening is the first but not the only line of defence against actors seeking to enter or gain status in Canada in an attempt to harm our citizens or national interests.

A screening is done in three stages: before a person gets to Canada, at the border and sometimes once the person is in Canada.

Before someone travels to Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency and CSIS work closely together to conduct security screenings of foreign nationals.

Based on risk indicators, IRCC determines which applications require an enhanced security screening by the CBSA or CSIS. The two agencies use a variety of techniques and methodologies, and also rely on a robust network of international partners to carry out these assessments.

All people wishing to enter Canada are subjected to a CBSA screening, and they must prove that they meet the entry requirements.

Decisions are made based on the information available at the time of entry.

Officials in my department and at IRCC are in the process of reviewing the files of the two individuals to understand specifically what information was available at the time the decisions were made.

Once we have these facts, we will move quickly to make the necessary changes to strengthen the system, if need be.

• (1010)

[English]

What is important for Canadians to know is that our security services operate continuously, seeking out threats within Canada and threats that may come to us from abroad, and then they respond quickly and effectively. The fact that these two individuals are in jail and facing serious criminal charges reflects the outstanding work done by the RCMP and their partners.

Our government's broader counterterrorism efforts are designed to detect and prevent terrorism activities obviously at the earliest opportunity. Together with our security and law enforcement partners, our government will continue to prevent, detect, disrupt and respond to any suspected terrorism threats and activities and will hold accountable those persons who may seek to undertake such activities.

With that, Mr. Chair, thank you for your invitation.

I imagine most of you have missed me a lot over the summer. You must be very excited to see me. Looking at your smiling faces I can see that this is a very happy reunion, and I'm looking forward to our conversation that will follow.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will now start our questions with Mr. Caputo for six minutes.

Go ahead, please, sir.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. I echo your thanks to our security services and responders for foiling what sounds like what would have been a serious terrorist attack that would have impacted Canadians.

Now, Minister, to be clear here, this person who is charged with terrorism offences with his son arrived in February 2018. Is that correct? I'm going off the information you gave me, Minister.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Yes. On February 5, 2018, the subject entered Canada at Pearson Airport.

Mr. Frank Caputo: He made an asylum claim in June 2018. Is that correct?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Yes. He went to an immigration department office and made that asylum claim.

Mr. Frank Caputo: He was granted citizenship in May 2024. Is that correct?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's correct.

Mr. Frank Caputo: He was provided a work permit in September 2018. That was the initial basis on which he was able to legally be in Canada. Is that right?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Yes. That appears to be correct given the chronology before the committee.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Okay, so he was a permanent resident in September 2021. Is that right?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's correct.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Thank you.

You wrote me a letter on August 12 of this year stating none of this, so I'm just going to note here for the record that you said, Minister, that we couldn't comment on any of this and then, lo and behold, here today we have this vast chronology that appeared just before the committee meeting. It seems odd that you would say you couldn't give us any of this information, and then here today we have all of this information from you.

What we have here, Minister, is obviously a colossal failure. I'll be direct. How did somebody slide under the radar for so long, from 2018 to 2024?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: With respect to your initial comment, you're right. In August I thought it was important, and I asked our officials, as did my colleague, Marc Miller, to produce the detailed chronology. I wanted to make sure that when we came to this committee and were able to talk about this publicly, we had the precise chronology that we could all rely on—

Mr. Frank Caputo: That's not what you said here. That's not what you said in your letter, though, sir. You said in your letter that there was an ongoing investigation, and yet here we have this information.

I don't want to focus on that. I want to focus on this: How did this person fly under the radar for six years?

• (1015)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: This person entered Canada on the dates you described, Mr. Caputo, and as reflected in the chronology. The security services—CBSA, CSIS and the immigration department—did all of the existing security checks and the normal security checks, including biometrics by the RCMP on a number of occasions. There was no information at the time those decisions were made that would have come to light to trigger what happened earlier this spring in terms of CSIS's investigation.

Mr. Frank Caputo: In fact, we actually had to hear from a foreign government about this. Isn't that right? CSIS got information from a foreign government, as reported by Global.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: You have been, Mr. Caputo, at this committee for some time. You know that the intelligence agencies are not going to ever discuss the sources of intelligence or the infor-

mation they get from partner agencies. First of all, it may be illegal to disclose that, but it's also very dangerous to the women and men who do that work, either at CSIS or in their partner agencies, to confirm the sources of this information.

I am not able to give a definitive answer on that question, and you know that very well.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Equally as troubling as that answer is the fact that we as Canadians did not have this intelligence for ourselves. How is it that foreign governments know more than we do on Canadian soil?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I don't accept the premise of that comment. Every intelligence agency collaborates with partners around the world. The most effective and the most renowned intelligence co-operation would be the Five Eyes countries, of which, as you know, Canada is a member. The information is shared between the security services on an hourly and daily basis, precisely because it makes our country safer, but we can also contribute, and often do in the great work done by CSIS, to the security of our partner countries as well.

That's a very normal security process that you understand very well.

Mr. Frank Caputo: With all due respect, Minister, you need to stop deflecting and start divulging. At this point here, you're saying.... You're not even confirming it. How is it that a foreign government knew more than we did in Canada about somebody who was on Canadian soil for six years? How is that?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Caputo, perhaps I wasn't clear in the previous answer. You understand very well—I'm happy to ask the interim director of CSIS to explain the reasons—why it is inappropriate, if not illegal, to answer questions around specific intelligence products and more so because this is an ongoing criminal case. Some of this evidence the prosecutors, in their judgment, may decide to bring before a court or before a jury at some future prosecution—

Mr. Frank Caputo: I'm not talking about the evidence. I'm talking about how the evidence was gathered. How is it that a foreign government knew more than our own government? That's what I'm talking about, not the evidence, sir.

At the end of the day, this is what we have. We have somebody who came in here and was here for six years flying under the radar. We don't know whether this happened before, and we have no assurances from you on whether or not this will happen again. You've deflected, you've diverted, and you've denied. That is absolutely inexcusable to this point. Canadians deserve answers and we are getting none.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caputo.

The minister can answer, if he wishes.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Caputo can repeat those phrases and those words. It doesn't make them true.

What you have here is a case where two individuals were arrested and are now in custody facing nine very serious criminal charges. This was a situation that could have presented a serious risk to the safety of Canadians. CSIS and the RCMP and other police partners did phenomenal work.

I am fortunate enough as the Minister of Public Safety, as I said, to be updated and briefed from time to time on some of these significant cases. That was the case for me on July 24. Four days later, these people were in police custody. I saw up close the very effective work that the RCMP, CSIS and others did. On the premise that somehow this person flew under the radar, this person was arrested, facing criminal charges and in jail before any risk was presented to Canadians.

That's exactly the kind of work that we rely on our police services, the RCMP and their partners, like CSIS, to do every day. I'm proud of that work.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We go now to Mr. MacDonald.

Please go ahead for six minutes, sir.

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today and for all your surrounding support.

Minister, it's obviously a red flag for Canada and our government and all Canadians, and it's reassuring to hear some of your remarks. I do take issue sometimes when the opposition members say that other international security agencies knew more than we did. Certainly I'm one to say I'm not really too worried about who knows what. As long as we foil the terrorist plot in this country, it doesn't matter. I'm glad the Five Eyes all work together, including Canada, in every regard.

Minister, our interest in the details in this case is obvious, but we also want to ensure procedural fairness for successful prosecution. Can you elaborate on the processes we're going to follow here, in layman's terms, so Canadians can understand how we're going to get to the end of this and ensure it never happens again?

• (1020)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. MacDonald, thank you for the question. Thank you for joining us, I hope, from the great province of Prince Edward Island this morning.

You're absolutely right. As my colleague the Minister of Immigration has said, and I have said the same thing, there needs to be a review of all of the steps surrounding this case, with the relevant dates, to understand exactly who knew what and when and whether changes or adjustments need to be made in terms of these screening protocols. The officials with me today are working on precisely that.

Our adversaries, threat actors who are seeking to do harm to Canada or to do harm to Canadians, are constantly evolving their measures and adjusting their measures. CSIS has talked about this publicly. Obviously the portfolios of Public Safety and the other agencies are evolving to ensure we have the very best measures in place for the safety of Canadians.

Mr. MacDonald, on your specific question around what reviews are taking place to ensure that we have this information, perhaps Mr. Gallivan from the Canada Border Services Agency or Ms. Lloyd from CSIS can talk briefly about the work they're doing. Of course, our colleagues at the immigration department are doing the same work and in some cases overlapping our work.

Perhaps Mr. Gallivan could add something.

Mr. Ted Gallivan (Executive Vice-President, Canada Border Services Agency): In terms of the review, we're both reviewing these specific individuals and backchecking what occurred and whether procedures were followed, and if procedures were followed, what changes to procedures may be required. We're also taking a representative sample of closed files that were similarly screened positive to see, in light of the information available today, whether changes to the procedures are needed.

As the minister said, there are three lines of defence. The CB-SA's first involvement is actually in the security screening process before people are issued a visa or status in Canada. In 2023, concern of various levels was expressed about 7,000 people based on that process. Liaison officers are situated around the world, and roughly 7,500 people were "no boarded" before they even got on a plane to Canada. In 2023, there were 35,000 people who were allowed to leave but who did not enter the country, and roughly 3,500 people, because of serious inadmissibility concerns, not just national security but organized crime and others, were stopped.

What I'm trying to say is that we do have checks and balances that work thousands of times a year, but we're asking ourselves the same tough questions about whether procedures were followed and whether, if they were and this individual was not caught, different procedures could catch them in the future.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, if there's time, perhaps Ms. Lloyd could talk about CSIS doing some of that work in partnership as well.

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd (Interim Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Thank you.

Mr. Chair, the service has important work in the security screening process. I can assure the committee that the existing procedures are robust and that we take the time and necessary effort with the information available at the time to treat every file seriously to make sure we adequately and effectively execute our mandate and authorities under the security screening mandate of the CSIS Act.

The Chair: Mr. MacDonald, you have a minute and a quarter left.

Mr. Heath MacDonald: Thank you.

We've seen in other jurisdictions as recently as last week—and I believe that in Germany individuals have attempted to carry out terrorist acts in the name of the Islamic State.

Can anyone here speak to the experience or lessons we may have learned from that situation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, I see that Commissioner Larkin has reached for a piece of paper, which may very well be because he has something he could add to that question.

Bryan, are you able to offer something?

• (1025)

Deputy Commissioner Bryan Larkin (Deputy Commissioner, Specialized Policing Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Minister.

On that particular incident I have no specific information, but generally speaking, as this committee would be well aware, in terms of the national security context, terrorism cases across the globe are becoming much more complex and much more frequent. I do want to highlight, though, that within Canada, violent extremism is significantly on the rise. Between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the RCMP laid 83 charges against 25 accused persons. Seven of those were young persons, which is concerning around the ideology and the radicalization. When you look at this from a larger perspective, the number of charges, year over year, showed a 488% increase.

The global context is changing significantly. Within the RCMP we continue to evolve our integrated national security teams across the country, particularly located in large urban areas, to actually combat this, but as Mr. Gallivan and Madam Lloyd have indicated, the important partnership is with our Five Eyes partners and that global connection.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, over to you for six minutes.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for joining us this morning. I think everyone agrees that the situation is rather alarming. Some shortcomings can most likely be blamed on individuals. Obviously we're not going to be able to determine that specifically at today's meeting, but we can at least try to get a little more clarity.

You told us that the normal security screening process had been followed. I imagine that is the case for both the father and the son. Is that correct?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: It is done in partnership with IRCC, because that is the department that receives the applications. The normal process was followed in the case of the father and son, as Mr. Gallivan stated.

As I said just now, we are doing an internal review to ensure that there is nothing in these two cases that the security agencies could have detected. If there was something, we will put additional measures in place. It's an ongoing process for us.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: In the process, there is an initial screening, and IRCC officers then determine whether an enhanced screening is warranted.

Is that what you said, Minister?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's correct.

Departmental officers receive the applications and, in some cases, request an enhanced check. Mr. Gallivan could give you more details on that. They can ask CBSA or CSIS to do additional screening. That's how the cases are normally identified.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: In the case of the two individuals in question, was this enhanced screening requested, first of all, and was it subsequently carried out?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Since your question goes to the heart of the matter, I will ask Mr. Gallivan to clarify that for you.

Mr. Ted Gallivan: I want to make it clear from the outset that we provide our colleagues with the criteria for referring cases to our security partners.

In the case of asylum seekers, for example, all adult claims are reviewed. A screening is done. In 2018 and 2021, the accused father went through that security screening process, which is shown in the chronology we presented this morning.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I should note that this includes biometric checks on RCMP databases, if I'm not mistaken.

Mr. Ted Gallivan: That's correct.

Our intelligence partners in Canada and abroad have six automated systems at our disposal. They already provide us with names, aliases, scenarios and dates. All of that is applied.

• (1030)

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Gallivan.

I'm sorry to interrupt. I don't mean to be rude, but you know that our speaking time is limited. I have about two minutes left, so I want to use them effectively.

You say that for the father, the enhanced screening process was completed between 2018 and 2021.

Is the same true of the son?

Mr. Ted Gallivan: In the case of the father, there were two screenings, one in 2018 and one in 2021. As for the son, he was screened when he arrived, in 2024 if I'm not mistaken.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay.

The son applied for his first study permit in July 2019, according to the chronology you gave us, and he entered Canada in February 2020. You did an enhanced screening four years after his arrival.

Is that correct?

Mr. Ted Gallivan: For the son, I meant the screening that was done when he arrived at the Canadian border and made a refugee claim.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay, but the son applied for a study permit in July 2019, entered Canada in February 2020 and was granted refugee status in July 2022.

However, you're talking about 2024. That seems a bit late in the game, Mr. Gallivan.

Am I wrong? Did you get the dates mixed up?

Mr. Ted Gallivan: It's possible. You would have to give me a moment to look at the chronology, because I want to be precise. However, I can confirm that he underwent the same screening as the father underwent twice.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay.

I have about 30 seconds left. I want to make sure I understand.

Was the enhanced security screening requested for the father and the son? Second, was it done? If so, when did it take place and what were the results?

In terms of the son, the dates seem to be a little confusing.

Mr. Ted Gallivan: The information about the father is very clear. With the time I have left, I will confirm that, and I will get back to you about the son at another meeting.

I can confirm that the father was screened in 2018 and 2021.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: We understand that.

Mr. Ted Gallivan: All normal procedures were followed, and a positive response was provided to our colleagues at IRCC.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: In terms of the son, then, you're not able to tell me when the screening took place.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: We'll go now to Mr. MacGregor for six minutes, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to join colleagues in thanking our witnesses and the minister for appearing before our committee and helping guide us through this important study.

Minister, my colleague Mr. Caputo touched on this. We received the chronology documents via email only 50 minutes before the start of this committee meeting. As every MP's office routinely does when doing case work, we often request chronology documents on behalf of constituents so we can better understand the particulars of their cases—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. MacGregor. I'm not sure the volume is level.

Can the witnesses hear the questions?

We'll turn up the volume, and we'll start your time over again, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Chair, I hope the volume is okay before I go into the questions.

The Chair: It's good.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

Minister, the email with the documents that were referred to, the chronology, was received only 50 minutes before the start of this committee. My office routinely requests these types of chronologies to help us with the individual casework of constituents, and we often get them in very short order.

I have a direct question for you, Minister. Given how important this information is to aid this committee in a very important and now very public investigation into this matter, why did it take so long, given that the letter requesting this particular meeting, my letter, was issued on August 7 and here we are on August 28? Can you give the committee a reason as to why these documents were given to the committee so late?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. MacGregor, through the Chair, thank you for the question, and thank you for your participation this morning. I'm happy to see you.

You referred to all of us as constituency MPs ask for chronologies from the immigration department with respect to particular files, and that's a process the immigration department endeavours to provide. I hope that colleagues will understand in this case you're dealing with two individuals who are facing nine very serious criminal terrorism charges and are currently in custody. There is an active prosecution under way and a publication ban issued by the court, so the ability of the immigration department or even CBSA or CSIS to simply produce a timeline necessarily has to go through the filter of the RCMP to ensure we're not prejudicing inadvertently a criminal prosecution. I know lawyers from the Department of Justice were providing advice. Public Safety senior officials were getting advice from lawyers.

Recognizing that it should have been here earlier, Mr. MacGregor, and that I regret, but I wanted to make sure we didn't rush something that inadvertently became in a criminal trial a reason to perhaps have an adverse finding or an adverse result. I wanted to make sure the RCMP and the prosecutors at the Department of Justice were comfortable that we were releasing the maximum amount of information we could without in any way endangering a criminal prosecution or risking violating a publication ban that the court has seen fit to put in place.

• (1035)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I want to join you in congratulating our intelligence service and our police services in successful arrests before what could have been a very brutal attack on Canadian soil. I understand multiple departments are involved in internal investigations right now.

Can you, as the Minister of Public Safety, give the committee and indeed Canadians who are watching this committee a sense of what your expected timelines are for these internal investigations? Is there anything that you can publicly report that you've learned from this and any changes you may have already set in motion to prevent this from happening in the future?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. MacGregor, thank you for that very good question.

You're right. The minute I was briefed on July 24 by senior officials of CSIS and the RCMP on this case, and the RCMP subsequently updated me after the arrests took place, I think on July 28, some four days later, the first thing that I asked officials was to tell me what processes are in place so we can learn from this sequence of events, as I noted, and ensure that any adjustments we need to make in the screening process are imposed as quickly as possible.

This work is being done with our partners at the immigration department. I believe the deputy minister of immigration will be here a little later this morning. My colleague, Marc Miller, will also be before this committee, I think, soon as well.

The challenge is, because of the very integrated nature between the immigration department and CBSA or CSIS with respect to these screenings and information that triggers, as Ted indicated, further review, that process is necessarily going to be rigorous and thorough. I've asked them to produce for me as quickly as possible advice on what, if any, changes we need to put in place. I know my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, also asked his officials to look into the citizenship status of the father. That process also, again I understand from comments Mr. Miller made publicly, is under way.

The problem, Mr. MacGregor, is the backdrop to all of this is this ongoing criminal prosecution, potential further investigations the police decide and a publication ban. The ability to talk about different elements of this work, on the advice of lawyers and the RCMP, is very limited.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Minister. I want to get one final question in related to this.

In terms of our international relations, the European Union has its own database. I believe it's referred to as the Schengen Information System. Of course, Canada has its Five Eyes.

Do you believe incidents like this are going to encourage your government to pursue better collaboration with western democracies such as the European Union in how we share some of that information? Do we have access to the particulars of information databases like the Schengen Information System, and how do we collaborate with those different datasets?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That's a critical question, Mr. MacGregor, and I'm glad you asked it.

I see in some CSIS briefings references to some of this information. Vanessa is in the best position to quickly tell you. I think she can reassure you that we have access to all of the intelligence data we need to keep Canadians safe.

On specific sets of data, Vanessa, can you perhaps help Mr. MacGregor?

• (1040)

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Mr. Chair, as the minister referenced earlier, in the complex, complex threat environment that we are currently facing, partnerships are a very important tool to be able to counter threats of violent extremism as well as a range of other threats. As the minister alluded to earlier, the service has many partnerships with countries around the world, in fact, over 300 partnerships for 150 countries around the world. That includes daily in-

formation sharing through a liaison that happens through our intelligence professionals around the world and leveraging information that can be shared from all types of datasets and collection by those agencies.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We'll start our second round of questions now with Ms. Lantsman.

Please go ahead. You have five minutes.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Minister, I'm going to jump right into my questions, because you've had a month to answer these questions. You said in your opening statement, "This is the way the investigative and national security system should work."

Your government issued a visa to somebody who was allegedly in a 2015 ISIS propaganda video and who then planned a mass casualty event outside of Toronto with a target in our country's largest city. The RCMP foiled that plot with intelligence from the French. Are you really telling Canadians that this is how our system should work? He's been here for six years.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, what I'm saying to Canadians is that the moment the Government of Canada became aware of concerning information regarding this individual, all of the appropriate steps were put in place by CSIS and the RCMP, which culminated in the arrest on the 28th of July and, thank God, as Ms. Lantsman said, the potential for serious risk or violence was averted.

With respect to the information regarding immigration processing, the immigration department will be here later. They are in a position to speak to the specific steps for an applicant, whether for asylum or permanent residency. We're looking at the security checks system—

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Minister, by my count, there are about six security checks in the documents you dumped on this committee 50 minutes before it started.

Do you really think the system is working if somebody like this, who's an alleged ISIS terrorist, who, if he was even a little bit more productive...would have resulted in mass casualties in Toronto? Do you really think that this is how the system should work? Do you really think that this is not a colossal failure of your government?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I am very proud of the work that the RCMP and CSIS did in thwarting this particular case. I think, as Mr. Gallivan indicated, if you look at the tens and hundreds of thousands of these cases that are reviewed every year as people seek asylum, submit asylum claims or apply for various visas, we necessarily rely on the work of our security agencies. We're always looking at ways to strengthen and evolve that posture as the threat context, as Ms. Lloyd said, evolves, but in this case I am satisfied that when the Government of Canada was aware or could possibly have been aware of this information, all of the steps were taken.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Well, they were aware six years ago when he came in. Speaking of that, we heard speculation—

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Ms. Lantsman, you can't assert something like that if you're in fact not—

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: He's been here for six years. It's just a known fact from your own documents.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: To assert, as you said, that people were aware six years ago of some information that came to light recently is wrong.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: There is speculation that he was brought in under the Syrian refugee program. Is this correct, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I'm not sure I can speculate on the particular immigration status and program. I'm not sure what part of that might be subject to the criminal trial. You could certainly ask the immigration department that question.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: If he was brought in through this stream and the government promised increased screening on asylum seekers in this country, do you believe, after everything we know today, that your government is doing its job on that?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Again, I don't want to give credence to the premise that you asked, because I don't have that information.

I want to be very precise that you don't link his arrival to a particular immigration program. The immigration department, I think, can provide you with those facts. I don't have them, but in answering your question, I don't want to appear to confirm that, because I don't have that information.

I am satisfied that both the security services and the RCMP with the immigration department have in place a series of rigorous screening and background checks that take place. You heard Ted talk about biometric screening and six different databases. We heard the interim director of CSIS talk about 300 agreements and 150 different countries. We have access to a great amount of information to keep Canadians safe. We need to make sure that this information is used in the most expeditious way possible.

• (1045)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: This person was brought into Canada six years before a terrorist plot was foiled just days before they would have killed people in Toronto, and you're telling Canadians that you're satisfied with the screening processes in place.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: As I said in my opening comments, this person and the nature of the allegations that ultimately led to the investigation and arrest came to our attention in June, and this person, from that point on, was obviously under the appropriate surveil-

lance to ensure that any threat was mitigated, and that led to the ultimate arrest on July 28.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lantsman.

We go now to Mr. Gerretsen for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you.

I want to start by thanking the committee for voting in favour of the Liberal motion to study this, because I think it's extremely important that we do that.

I do take issue, Minister. Both Conservatives who have asked you questions have referred to this as a colossal failure. I think that when you look at the various different organizations that have been working together—as you indicated, some seven or eight organizations—this is an example of how we should be working, how our organizations and agencies should be working together to get the best results for Canadians.

I take issue or I recognize that Mr. Caputo seems to take issue with the fact that the information that assisted us in coming to the conclusion that we did was given to Canada, but the reality is that Canada is a net importer of information. As a matter of fact, if you think of all the agencies throughout the different countries that would work together, every agency would end up being a net importer. That's the whole purpose of coming together with other countries to share information so that we can all benefit from it.

That being said, can you talk a little bit about the risks, Minister, with disclosing the exact details of how CSIS may have become aware of the threat posed to us?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Gerretsen, thank you for the question. I can certainly, based on briefings I've had over the last year and a month from CSIS, offer a view, and perhaps Ms. Lloyd could add something.

The reason CSIS or people like me, who may have access to some of this information in the routine course of their job, don't confirm or identify particular sources or partner countries, as you said, that are sharing information with us—and we would, of course, share information that we gather with those same countries—is that if we confirmed both the tradecraft and the way these intelligence agencies gather information or if we confirmed it was agency X and not agency Y, perhaps some of these bad threat actors could identify either human sources who would be at huge risk—you can understand what that would mean—or be able to understand the tradecraft, the very sophisticated and effective way that CSIS and other agencies gather this information in order to protect Canadians. That's why every previous government has been very prudent, and that's why the Security of Information Act also provides criminal sanctions for those who cross the line.

Perhaps Vanessa could add something specific, or, Mark—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I do actually have another question that maybe, Interim Director Lloyd, you could answer as well.

If I'm not mistaken, today is the one-month anniversary of the arrest of the individuals. I've personally never seen a chronology of events disclosed to the public so quickly, despite the fact that I'm hearing from across the table that my colleagues are concerned about how quickly this was released.

Are you aware, Interim Director, of any other cases in which the details have been released so quickly to the public?

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Honourable member, it is our objective to be as transparent as we can with Canadians. The safety and security of Canadians and Canada's interests are of paramount importance to our organization as well as to our security partners who join us here today.

I can also say that it is equally important, as the minister referenced, to be very vigilant with regard to disclosure of specific facts. As the minister referenced, this can allow for our adversaries to learn where they went wrong. Providing them a road map to change their methods will have the impact of making it more difficult to detect these threats. Equally we hope to be able to preserve the capabilities and methodologies and the tradecraft of our service that the minister referenced in order to address those threats.

• (1050)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I appreciate that and I appreciate your diligence in answering that question.

Are you aware, Minister, of any other time that information was released as quickly as we've seen it released in this particular case?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Certainly, Mr. Gerretsen, not in the time that I've been minister; I think we recognize, and my colleague Marc Miller has said so publicly, the understandable questions that Canadians had when they learned, following the RCMP news release, of these arrests. I think it is reasonable for the government and for Canadians to ask how this sequence of events that we've laid out before the committee could take place, and what we can learn from that sequence of events to ensure that the very best measures are in place. That's the work that's ongoing. We thought it was important to lay that out for Canadians.

I hope people understood my opening comments when I said very clearly that in the month of June, when CSIS became aware of some of this concerning information, they immediately took all of the necessary measures to ensure that the threat was managed or mitigated; I may not be using the right technical term. The RCMP were involved as well. Then we saw the successful arrest on the 28th of July. These people remain in custody, in jail. Their bail was denied. There will be a prosecution.

In our system, and you know this very well, Mr. Gerretsen, that should be the objective in terms of keeping Canadians safe. I'm confident that with this case, once the details come out in a trial, I hope, and once a jury or a judge is able to evaluate the evidence, Canadians will understand, perhaps, how these cases can be successfully handled.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Well, I'm not a lawyer, but I'm sure the two former Crown prosecutors who are sitting at this table would understand that very well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gerretsen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you said,

[*English*]

that it "came to our attention in June".

[*Translation*]

The chronology also shows that CSIS became aware of the threat in June 2024. We know that the video that led to all of this dates from 2015. It took nine years for CSIS to become aware of it.

Can you explain why the security services did not become aware of the video until June 2024?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That is a completely reasonable question, Mr. Fortin, and I understand why you are asking it.

To make sure everything is very clear, I'm going to ask Mr. Larkin to answer. He explained to me exactly why we cannot comment on the alleged video.

Mr. Larkin, can you quickly explain the context to Mr. Fortin?

[*English*]

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

In relation to the emergence in the media of a video, it would be very difficult and irresponsible for me to speak specifically to the video. We have an ongoing criminal prosecution but we also have an active ongoing investigation.

Monsieur Fortin, it's very difficult to speak directly to any evidence or any information that may prejudice the criminal prosecution.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, but I don't have much time.

I understand that we can't talk about the video, and I'm not asking you to talk about it. I'm asking whether you really only found out about the video in June 2024 or if you knew about it before.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Again, Mr. Fortin, I want to be very careful.

I can tell you, as I said in my comments, that the government was made aware of this high-level threat in June. However, the details of who had access to such and such a document or such and such evidence—

• (1055)

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I'm just asking for the date, Minister. Did you really become aware of it in June 2024, or were you aware of it before that?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: The problem, Mr. Fortin, is that this is precisely the kind of information that could be part of the evidence in a criminal trial, as Mr. Larkin said. I was advised to be very careful about that kind of detail.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I understand your reticence, but the fact remains that the effectiveness of our oversight services is at stake. Seriously, six years after granting citizenship to someone...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We go now to Mr. MacGregor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I also want to ask a few questions about that video from June 2015. I understand the limitations you have in answering specifics about it, but to Mr. Fortin's point, June 2015 was among the final months of the previous Harper Conservative government. It's over nine years ago. It is a publicly acknowledged video, given that it was reported by Global News.

Minister, I guess what I want to know is this. Broadly speaking, when videos like this are released to the public through various outlets, can you talk a little bit about the procedures in place nowadays—I'm sure the biometrics technology is very different in 2024 compared with what it was in 2015—that allow the analysis of these videos? As well, without jeopardizing the current investigation or the case before the court, what lessons can you publicly tell us that you've learned from this experience that you may be now applying to future analyses of videos of this nature?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. MacGregor, thank you for that very good question. Because it is very technical and we don't want to bump into what Deputy Commissioner Larkin said, I think Ted Gullivan from CBSA can answer specifically for you in terms of the timeline and perhaps other technologies. I want to give Ted a chance, because you'll get a precise answer that won't somehow allow me to end up stepping into a criminal trial where I shouldn't.

Ted.

Mr. Ted Gullivan: Independent of the criminal investigation, the CBSA, subsequent to media reporting, went and obtained an instance of this video from the dark web. It's part of the review where we're asking ourselves questions about the procedures.

I think I can confirm, through a review of the treatment of these individuals, that the video wasn't available to the CBSA officials who were screening the individual. I can say that the preliminary indications were that the video of the father was not available, that instance that we found, in 2018 or 2021. It was only made available more recently. We are trying to see if there are other instances of that video or if it could have been obtained in other ways. We're also asking ourselves the question around the feasibility of finding a video like that if you don't know about it.

I think I can confirm to the committee that the CBSA has an independent copy of that. We're being very careful in what we say. We're looking at it in the context of this review that the minister mentioned. Preliminary indications by the CBSA are that they certainly weren't available in 2018 and 2021. That's the purpose of the review, to get to the bottom of those questions. Preliminary review wasn't available during the screening in 2018 or 2021, with serious questions about whether it was findable if you didn't know what you were looking for.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Caputo, go ahead on your point of order.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Thank you.

It's been raised a number of times here that we only got access to this chronology that really should have been in our hands weeks ago. I believe we probably have agreement from most people, but I would propose that the minister stay for one extra hour here, depending on his availability, because I think there are still a number of questions to be answered.

We are also not hearing from the Minister of Immigration this week, which was part of our motion. We haven't had an explanation for that either.

The Chair: Minister LeBlanc doesn't answer to that question. That's for us. We did invite Mr. Miller, but he was unavailable.

I have an understanding that the minister can stay for a short while longer. I had envisioned two more five-minute slots—

• (1100)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. McKinnon, you may have the wrong understanding. I'm happy to be here. I agreed to come for one hour. I am leaving on a flight for New Brunswick, going almost straight to the airport, with one stop at the public safety department to sign a particular document. I'll be spending tomorrow morning getting my monthly immunoglobulin treatment to boost my immune system. I don't intend to miss that, and I don't intend to miss the flight.

That being said, I'm happy to take a few more questions, but I cannot stay an hour. I've been an opposition MP too. I get exactly what Mr. Caputo is doing. We certainly released all of the documents the moment they were prepared by the Justice officials and we could rely on them. There was certainly no attempt to wait. The documents had to be translated, and we wanted to, of course, respect that rule.

I don't know, Mr. Chair, if there are another few minutes. I see that it's after 11 o'clock, and I will have to leave very shortly.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

To finish the second round, we would do one more five-minute question from the Conservatives and one from the Liberals. Would you be able to stay for 10 more minutes?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Yes.

The Chair: Excellent.

That being the case, we will go with Mr. Brock for five minutes.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Minister, two weeks ago, or actually 16 days ago, the Prime Minister notified Canada that his government was taking the case very seriously. He secondly said that this was a very serious situation and that you, sir, as the Minister of Public Safety, would be doing a full follow-up to understand exactly how this happened and share all that was learned “at the appropriate moment”.

That was 16 days ago. You've indicated the process, by which you've disclosed this five-page document to committee literally 20 minutes before the commencement. In my former career as a Crown attorney, if I tried to pull something like this in front of the judge, I would get a severe tongue-lashing. This is not procedural fairness. This is highly, highly suspicious in terms of the timing by which you released that.

Moving on, I too want to talk about the video, the notorious video from 2015. According to Global News, they easily obtained a copy of that. It appeared to match the one that resulted in the aggravated assault charge that the RCMP recently laid. It shows “a prisoner wearing an orange jumpsuit and suspended from a pole in a desert. A man wearing a black robe and a cap bearing the ISIS logo then hacks at the prisoner's limbs with a sword”, cutting off his hands and cutting off his feet.

Global News continues:

His face briefly visible, he appears to be a middle-aged man with a henna-tinted beard.

It is unclear whether the victim was already dead when he was dismembered. The video, titled “Detering Spies,” was published in June 2015 by the media arm of the ISIS branch in western Iraq, according to an expert.

We know that Mr. Eldidi received his citizenship in September 2023. I'm looking at the chronology here: “Security Screening Note: Application referred to CSIS for security checks in NOV2023; CSIS returned a favourable recommendation.”

What type of message does that send to Canadians regarding our national security agency when a video that was widely distributed some eight years previous was not flagged against any advanced biometrics? The man's face was clearly visible. Is CSIS not tracking these videos? What other terrorists are walking the streets here in Canada right now waiting to commit terrorist acts on innocent Canadians? What the hell is going on?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Brock, through the chair, I would also think that when, in your previous job as a Crown attorney, you would be commenting with the benefit of parliamentary privilege on something that you know very well may form part of the evidence in an upcoming criminal trial, as the deputy commissioner of the RCMP said, I'm not sure you, on the steps of a courthouse in the middle of an ongoing trial, would have been as dramatic as you were for your social media clip.

Now, that being said—

• (1105)

Mr. Larry Brock: Minister, I am not a Crown attorney right now. I am a parliamentarian asking the tough questions that Canadians want to know.

Why did our national security agency not flag this video eight years prior and use the image of this terrorist, if not killer, who was dismembering limbs from a person on a pole? Why was that image not flagged against every other asylum claimant to ensure that there were adequate security checks being done? According to your note, CSIS cleared this individual, returning a favourable recommendation. How did that slip through? How did that slip through, sir?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Again, you're referring to alleged dramatic images in a video—

Mr. Larry Brock: It's not alleged. It happened. The video is not alleged.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I think we should be careful talking about criminal evidence. As I said in my opening comments, and Ted Gallivan will be able to give you some precision with respect to the video and how security screening agencies came into possession of that information, at the time when the relevant decisions were being made by the immigration department and the security services were doing their work, the existence of that video or the information that you have now recounted to the committee was not available. I think Mr. Gallivan can provide some precision in terms of why that was the case.

Mr. Larry Brock: It begs the question as to why.

The Chair: Mr. Brock, that's enough. I think we should let Mr. Gallivan speak after the minister is gone.

We will go now to Ms. Damoff for five minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. It's a pleasure to be back on this committee. I was on here from 2015 onwards.

I have to say that I'm really proud of the investments the government has made to restore our security agencies to where they should be to deal with these kinds of security threats. Someone recently said to me that under the debt reduction action plan, a fine fishnet had become pretty porous because of cuts. One of the first things we did when we got elected was to update our national security framework and pass legislation that actually has given tools to our security agents to deal with these evolving threats, which have become more global in nature. They cross borders, so it's becoming more difficult.

Minister, I know you've only been in the role for a year, but I have to say that you have led this group of people admirably. Since we got elected in 2015, I'm quite proud of the investments we've made. I wonder if you and perhaps the heads of the different agencies could comment on....

First, actually, I'd like to congratulate you, Ms. Lloyd, on your new role leading an agency that does such important work for Canadians.

In spite of the fearmongering that's been going on here, can Canadians have confidence in our agencies and can Canadians feel safe that we have the tools, and the continuously evolving tools, to deal with these kinds of terrorist threats?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Ms. Damoff, thank you for the question.

I'm happy to see you as well at this committee again. You did important work here, in your role as a parliamentary secretary, on many of these issues.

Our government has sought to increase resources, for example, to CSIS. One of the most significant investments in both technology and capacity at CSIS happened in budget 2024 a few months ago. I think all of us should be very proud as parliamentarians and of our colleagues in the other place as well for adopting Bill C-70, which gave, for the first time in decades, new authorities to CSIS in a digital age.

To the comments about the existence of videos on the dark web, I think it's important, Ms. Damoff, for people to understand that I hear this from the security agencies. I have never, myself, been on the dark web, looking for these kinds of videos. It's called the dark web precisely because these kinds of videos don't normally come with credits and contact information at the end of them, so the idea that there's some simple way that security agencies and partners around the world are able to have access to the sickeningly thousands and millions of images of this kind of thing is why partnerships are so important. That's why working with the 150 other countries that Vanessa described is the best way for CSIS and for its partners in the RCMP and CBSA to do this work.

They need access to the technology. They need legislative authorities, which this Parliament gave them a few months ago, which is terrific, and they need their government to support them with the funds necessary to modernize. I believe that work is being done.

I'm lucky enough, with this super interesting job I have, to see that work up close every week and every month. As I said in my opening comments, Ms. Damoff, I was briefed by CSIS on July 24. When Deputy Commissioner Larkin and his colleagues, Mark Flynn and Commissioner Duheme, updated me on July 28 that these people were in custody and that a successful arrest had been made, it reminded me of the remarkable work done by these women and men in the agencies represented here, of the danger of their work and of the value of working constructively with partners around the world.

If we're not constructive and if we're reckless in releasing information, discussing origins of information and commenting on media reports of certain images and on the existence of evidence that may end up forming part of a criminal prosecution, we'll increasingly be unable to get that information, and we won't look like the reliable partner that we are with those agencies.

I heard from the director of MI6 himself, the chief, in London, about how much he values the work that CSIS does and the infor-

mation that CSIS gives MI6. I thought it was reassuring for Canadians to know that somebody as interesting in the world as the chief, who would be C in the films we've all seen.... When Sir Richard Moore told me that MI6 is absolutely dependent on CSIS and other partners, it told me the system is working quite well.

• (1110)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I just wanted to add, though I know my time is up, Mr. Chair, that the Conservatives voted against every investment that we've made in these security agents over the last nine years.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

Thank you, Minister. I wish you safe travels. Thank you for being here and for your forbearance in staying with us a little longer.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, thank you, and thanks to colleagues.

I look forward to seeing you in a few weeks. I'll be in your province, in the great city of Nanaimo, in 10 days.

Thank you, colleagues, for taking time in the middle of a non-sitting week to join us.

Thank you for the invitation.

The Chair: B.C. is the best province to come to. Thank you.

We will suspend for a couple of minutes. We'll bring in another witness.

• (1110)

(Pause)

• (1120)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

On this panel, we have Mr. Harpreet S. Kochhar, deputy minister, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration joining us, as well as all the other people we've been breaking in all morning.

We will start a fresh round of questions. This will be a six-minute round.

We'll start with Mr. Motz, please. No. I'm sorry. We'll start with Mr. Caputo. You have six minutes, please.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I'm sorry, Chair. I thought that had been communicated to you.

Thank you all to the witnesses.

I see that Mr. Kochhar is joining us.

This is for anybody on the panel. When was this individual, the accused—I'm not going to mention his name—first flagged?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar (Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Chair, the initial contact that we had with this person was when he submitted his application as a temporary resident visitor visa in 2017.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Was he flagged at that point as a concern?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: No. It was just the first interaction that we had.

Mr. Frank Caputo: When did he first come to the attention of security or intelligence authorities as somebody who should be flagged, as someone we would have concerns about, potentially terrorist concerns?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Mr. Chair, what I would say in that regard is that, in a way, when we are doing our immigration procedure, we regularly go through the initial screening, as well as the other screening through biometrics. That's when we work with our security partners to see if there are any things that are any flags on that one.

Mr. Frank Caputo: The information we have is that, in December 2017, he was initially refused a visitor visa. Is that correct?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: That is correct, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Do we know why he was refused that?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: I don't have the details, but the folks who are actually... The visa is rejected due to multiple reasons, whether there is incomplete documentation or whether there is missing information, but the person who is evaluating is not satisfied with what is provided, so there are multiple reasons for that.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Do we know if he was rejected based on security reasons?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: To my knowledge, that was not the case, because when he applied again in 2018 as a visitor visa, he was approved.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Okay.

Sir, are you able to confirm to this committee, in writing in follow-up to this meeting, that this rejection wasn't for a security reason?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: I'll have to actually confirm those things in terms of that. Yes.

Mr. Frank Caputo: If you don't have the answer today, could you please provide that in writing to this committee so that we can be aware.

If my understanding is correct, this individual was flagged on a number of occasions. This is for anybody at the table, but maybe this is best answered by CSIS. When was the first time that he was flagged as a security risk?

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Mr. Chair, as per the details in the chronology and in the material that's been put to the committee today, the first instance when the Canadian Security Intelligence Service became aware that this individual could pose a potential threat was in June 2024, so in June of this year.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I don't mean to be and perhaps I'm being too direct, but I'll be direct. Is that not a concern, a failure, when we think that somebody who is in a video, publicly...? I know there's been a lot of discussion about whether we can discuss the contents

of that video, but this person clearly was the subject matter of a depiction that was of serious concern. This person was ultimately granted citizenship. This person was on Canadian soil for six years. Is there not some failure that we didn't know about his activities beforehand?

● (1125)

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Mr. Chair, again, thank you for the question.

I would respectfully disagree with the premise that there was a failure in this case. As referenced earlier by our minister, there are several lines of defence—security screening programs are one—and they do begin before people arrive in Canada, as they come to our border and also once they have arrived in Canada.

I would say that the third line of defence, which is national security investigations, in this case was very successful.

I can again assure the committee that as soon as CSIS had that information, we acted, we assessed, and we mitigated the threat in conjunction with our security partners.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I have no doubt that CSIS acted and acted accordingly. From what I can see, it did an excellent job, as did the RCMP. Obviously, we commend them for their work.

As an outsider looking in, when I see that somebody arrived on Canadian soil in 2017, after obvious ties to ISIS, that they were given citizenship in 2023 or 2024, and then, despite those earlier ties, they only came to our attention in 2024, that gives me cause for concern. It begs the question, has anybody else slipped through the cracks in this way?

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Mr. Chair, I again can assure the committee that the service takes its security screening responsibilities very seriously. We take the time and the due effort, with regard to every file that is referred to the service, to make assessments, which we provide to our partners, that go to decisions that can be taken, based on the information that is available at the time.

I also would like to assure the committee that public safety is the service's number one priority and that we are mindful of the potential threats that cross our borders, as well as those that exist here, and we work very hard, on an ongoing basis, to address those threats.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caputo.

We will go now to Ms. Zahid.

Go ahead for six minutes, please.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses.

My first question is for Mr. Gallivan.

How many individuals do you reject for entry into Canada over the course of a year? What are the reasons for the rejections? How does CBSA deal with bad actors who could potentially lie to us about their reasons for trying to get into Canada?

Could you explain that process?

Mr. Ted Gallivan: Sure.

Consistent with my prior testimony, 100% of asylum seekers are reviewed. Then for temporary residency, permanent residency, there's a selected sample sent for screening.

In 2023, there were 1,000 who met the threshold of conclusive serious inadmissibility, and then there was a further number where it was suspected. We flagged roughly 6,000 people through those test checks that I mentioned. Those can occur well before the person even gets to the airport.

Then we have a second pass where CBSA is looking for serious criminality, misrepresentation, a whole series of threats, including national security, and where we physically have people located abroad who “no board” people from planes. That's roughly 7,500 people back to that 2023 year.

The third line of defence, just from a CBSA perspective, is when people actually present to the port of entry, where border service officers inspect and interview people. Again, the broad category of people who ought not to be in the country and who are in an allowed-to-leave situation is roughly 35,000 a year. There are an additional 3,500 for serious inadmissibility. Again, serious inadmissibility can include national security threats, espionage or organized crime. Those are very significant bad actors.

Those are the layers of defence. Those screens rely on the professional judgment of our employees, as well as information from domestic partners seated around the table here and from international partners. The CBSA approach to the screen is to know who we're looking for or the aliases and their patterns of travel and behaviour. We scrutinize travel history, where you've been and those kinds of things. We interview people. We're basically trying to test the story put in front of us working from a script from intelligence partners that tells us what to be watchful for.

• (1130)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

Is security screening repeated again at the stage of granting citizenship? How does that process work?

Mr. Ted Gallivan: As with this case, 100% of asylum seekers are subject to security screening. A selection of high-risk people seeking other statuses are subject to review. Having reviewed, as we did in this case, this individual in 2018 and 2021 at the citizenship stage, having already vetted them twice, they weren't passed through CBSA for a check before citizenship, having been already vetted twice.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Larkin.

What factors led to the RCMP being able to take such swift action to protect Canadians and the city of Toronto in this particular case?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: Mr. Chair, in July 2024, we received information from our partner agency, CSIS, in relation to a potential threat to Canadian security. The greater Toronto area INSET, which is an integrated national security team that involves other police of jurisdiction, including the OPP, Toronto Police Service, Peel Regional Police, Durham and York, commenced an active criminal investigation that included significant surveillance and monitoring, which ultimately, on July 28, led to the charge.

I'm not able to speak to specifics as this matter is before the courts, but the information that we provided made this, obviously, a national priority. We dedicated significant resources in partnership with other police of jurisdiction, which ultimately led to the arrest and to the ongoing matter before our judicial system.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Kochhar in regard to the immigration department.

Can you please explain and elaborate on the role that biometric information plays in protecting Canadian borders and in serving as the foundation of identity management?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Chair, biometrics is an important tool that we employ in terms of collecting that information so that we can actually match it through the RCMP with the different databases it has.

We also have the capability, with the collection of that biometric information, to actually ping our Five Eyes partners too. That database is valid for up to 10 years. At different stages—one being the journey of the immigrant from the temporary resident visa to that of a permanent resident and to citizenship—biometrics is an important tool for us.

Just to confirm one more thing, this is important also as part of identity management for individuals, as well as the North American perimeter approach, which actually allows our partners to have similar information.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Can you explain the role of the immigration officers who conduct initial admissibility assessments of permanent and temporary resident applications? What training do officials at IRCC receive, and what tools do they have to effectively screen those applications?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Mr. Chair, IRCC officers are highly trained officers who have an in-depth knowledge of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, as well as other acts, like the Citizenship Act and so on.

An important part is during the initial screening at the temporary resident stage. If a person is applying overseas for a visitor visa, an initial security screening is done along with different questions that are asked in our questionnaire. Supporting documents are seen. For any of those, if they ever actually raise a flag, we can then go to our security partners for enhanced screening.

Generally, if the officers, who are well trained in this—these are foreign service officers posted abroad—are satisfied with the information provided, then a temporary resident visa is actually given. For the permanent resident visa, there is a different procedure, although in the same case, the eligibility and the admissibility are always the backbone of our immigration system.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zahid.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have six minutes.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kochhar, you told us about the admission process for temporary permits and—

• (1135)

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Fortin, but the sound quality is poor.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Everything seems normal here.

The Chair: Can you try again?

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Yes. Everything seems to be working on my end.

The Chair: It seems to be okay now. You can start again.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was going to ask a question of Mr. Kochhar, who just explained the screening process to us.

Am I to understand, Mr. Kochhar, that you will not request a security screening in all cases, but only when the person responsible believes it is useful? Is that what you said?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

What I mentioned was that enhanced security screening is based on the initial screening. That is when the immigration officer may decide, based on risk indicators and the initial information. All visitors, all students—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay. Am I to understand that when you determine that there is no risk, there is no security screening?

[*English*]

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Initial screening does include other biometrics, which is part of our security screening, as well as the ability to look at the departmental databases and look against the risk indicators, which we have worked on with CBSA and CSIS.

There is a security screening, which is called the initial security screening. Only if there is a flag will we refer it for a comprehensive security screening, which is then referred to our security partners.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Lloyd, I understand from Mr. Kochhar's answer that a security screening is not always requested if there is no red flag. However, when there is a red flag, CSIS needs to conduct an enhanced screening. I would like you to give us your opinion.

I know that my colleagues and I often come back to the same issue, but I recall the events. A video from 2015 was discovered. In the many years since then, this individual was granted a temporary resident permit, then refugee status and then Canadian citizenship. That video had been around for many years. We learned that French security services had found it and had notified you that it existed.

How do you explain the fact that you were not aware of the video until June 2024?

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: I thank the member for his question.

[*English*]

With the member's permission, I will proceed in English in order to be clear and precise.

I would refer the committee to the additional information that has been put to the committee today about how the service undertakes the enhanced biometric security screening that my colleague Dr. Kochhar mentioned.

To the member's question, I am not going to comment on allegedly leaked classified information. As I mentioned in my comments earlier this morning, information exchange with partnerships is an important tool as it relates to our ability to combat threats globally and ensure the safety of not only Canadians but also citizens of the world.

I would like to echo—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Lloyd.

I understand that you cannot comment on the case we are talking about right now because it is before the courts. However, I would like to understand the normal process.

As I said at the outset to the Minister of Public Safety, instead of pointing fingers at each other, we should be looking for a course of action that ensures that a situation as deplorable and dangerous as this one does not reoccur.

What checks do you do? I'm not asking you to comment on this particular case, but let's speak hypothetically. How can you explain the fact that we don't know for years that a serious crime has been committed by an individual abroad and that, in the meantime, he is granted refugee status and Canadian citizenship? It has happened, so it could happen again.

How can such major failures occur in Canada? What can be done to correct them?

• (1140)

[*English*]

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: I'll perhaps repeat my earlier testimony.

In terms of the service's important role in security screening in this case and in any case referred by our partners that comes before us, we do our work based on the information available at the time. As mentioned in the chronology and in earlier testimony today, the information that there was a potential threat posed in this case surfaced to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in June of this year.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Lloyd.

That said, how is it that you didn't know about it until June?

[*English*]

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Unfortunately, I will not comment on the specifics of this case in order to protect the integrity of our operations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I understand. I apologize for rushing you, but I only have a few seconds left.

I just want to understand. Never mind this case. Perhaps you'll tell me that it is an exceptional situation, it has never happened before and it will never happen again. I would still like to know how, in general, it can take years for CSIS to be made aware of a situation like this.

[*English*]

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Mr. Chair, what I can tell the committee is that there is an increasingly complex and intensifying global threat environment, and this does include instances where individuals are mobilizing to violent extremist activities. This is a priority for our organization, as is the safety and security of all Canadians in this case and in any other case that comes before us.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: We go now to Mr. MacGregor.

Go ahead, please. You have six minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think I'll send my first question to Interim Director Lloyd of the service.

Again, on this video, I'm not going to get into the specifics because I understand the limitations you have in answering in a public forum.

My question is more on the process, and it's going to be related also to the recent changes that Parliament enacted through Bill C-70 and to the complete overhaul that we did with the dataset regime that is under the CSIS Act.

I have a couple of questions for you, Interim Director Lloyd.

Many Canadians are not very familiar with the dark web and the millions of images and videos that are present there. Could you tell the committee about the magnitude of what it's like and about the challenge of sifting through those images and videos in terms of finding that important data that you can then share with relevant agencies to determine whether there are any security threats that have a potential of entering Canada?

Also, what about recent changes in Bill C-70, notably the computational analysis of datasets? We essentially took an analog law and brought it up to speed in a digital era. What do those changes allow the service to do now in sifting through those images and videos in order to make these kinds of important determinations?

I think, on behalf of Canadians, this committee is serving a very important role. While we may not be able to ask you about the specifics of this case, I think Canadians also deserve to know about the kinds of tools the service is employing, about the strategies going forward and about the lessons you've learned from this so that these kinds of instances are not going to happen in the future.

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Mr. Chair, I will start by responding to the honourable member's comments with regard to what I can and cannot say at committee. Unfortunately, I'm unable to answer in detailed specifics about the capabilities, methodologies and tradecraft that we employ in this or in any other case. To do so would jeopardize the integrity of our operations and our ability to conduct our operations securely.

I do thank the honourable member for referencing the changes to legislation that we received through Parliament under Bill C-70, which is an act countering foreign interference. The honourable member is quite right. There were changes to the permissions to and authorities to the service under the act, both with respect to our dataset regime and also with regard to information sharing.

Perhaps I would suggest that it is the latter piece of the change that may be most helpful in this instance, because the permissions that are given there are for the organization to share, beyond the federal government, classified information in order to increase resiliency against threats. As such, the information sharing provisions that we will move forward on under those changes will allow us, in fact, to inform Canadians more about the threats that exist and to be able to equip them to be resilient with regard to those threats.

• (1145)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for that.

For my next question I'll turn to the deputy minister from Citizenship and Immigration.

We've had some reference not only in the chronology that was given to this committee 50 minutes before we started, but also in some of the conversations through questions about risk indicators and so on. The notes in the documents that we received do state that specific risk indicators cannot be disclosed in order to protect the integrity of the immigration screening program, so that is well understood. Could you give the committee and Canadians who are listening to this some examples of, broadly speaking, what these risk indicators can include?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Mr. Chair, the risk indicators that we deploy at the initial screening and through the immigration process are very much developed in combination with IRCC, with the CBSA and with CSIS. There are risk indicators that will point to whether there are flags that are because of potential fraud and whether there are any other aspects that we should be careful about in terms of our security partners.

Ted may be able to give you a little more in terms of the magnitude of those risk indicators in general and not specific to this case.

Mr. Ted Gallivan: We ask for 10-year residency, 10-year employment history and 10-year travel history. We compare that against the passport. We also use a variety of open sources of information to test whether people lied or misrepresented themselves. Through the intelligence function, we have certain countries and certain time periods that make us worried about associations, so there is an in-depth review of friends, family members and associates—a bit of a spider web of who the individual works with or spends time with.

Those are some of the tests that are applied to every single case. Then, as I mentioned, the intelligence services feed in a certain roster of individuals and aliases we should be worried about, and that screen is also applied.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

That wraps up round one. We're running short on time, so I'm going to propose to the committee that we do a lightning round of three minutes per party. Many of these organizations will be returning in the next meeting, although we will have a slight change in personnel.

Mr. Caputo has a point of order.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I know that we are running short on time. This is our first opportunity, though, to ask questions. I would respectfully ask that we canvass the officials as to their availability to stay, rather than immediately going to a lightning round.

The Chair: Do we want to do that? Do we have agreement?

Go ahead, Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I thought you just said a moment ago that the majority of them were staying.

The Chair: The organizations, all of them, will be present in the next meeting. The individuals may not be. Ms. Lloyd will be here, I believe, but I'm not sure who else.

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair, if they're all coming back and they've been here for two hours to answer questions, in fairness to them, to give them half an hour—or once you do the round, probably slightly less—to go to the washroom and perhaps get a bite to eat is only fair. It's not like this is our only opportunity to ask questions of these agencies.

The Chair: Mr. Brock, go ahead.

Mr. Larry Brock: I understand and appreciate the intervention of Ms. Damoff, but there is one witness in particular—I am the next Conservative to ask questions—from the RCMP who is only here for the first panel. He has other business to attend to, and I want to focus a lot of my questions on him. I'm mindful of three minutes. I could probably get it completed in three minutes, although I would prefer five.

I just want to put on the record that not everyone currently here will be returning for the second panel. I'm also mindful of the fact that you gave us an almost 15-minute recess to allow the minister to leave and to allow us to refresh ourselves and take a comfort break.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

We'll go ahead, then, with three minutes.

We'll start with Mr. Brock.

● (1150)

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you for everyone's attendance. My questions in the three minutes will be directed to you, Deputy Commissioner.

I know that we don't want to talk a lot about the video. I appreciate from a legal perspective why we are perhaps approaching dangerous territory, but I'm not getting into the evidence per se or the ability of the Crown to prove this case beyond a reasonable doubt. I'm taking a look at the video at face value.

There is an unknown quotient here—whether the victim was alive or already dead before this particular accused chose to cut off his hands and feet. If he were alive, it would open up the possibility of attempted murder charges. If the actions of the accused caused the death of the victim, with him in essence bleeding out, we'd be looking at murder charges under the Criminal Code. If the person were already dead and then the dismemberment took place, we'd be looking at a section 182 offence regarding an indignity committed against a dead body.

Are these potentially some of the issues? I'm not asking for a positive confirmation, but rather an acknowledgement that what I just described to you could potentially be live issues in regard to a police investigation.

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: As indicated earlier, a significant amount of work has gone into this investigation in a short period of time, with a significant number of resources dedicated. I want to highlight the excellent work of GTA INSET and all of our police of jurisdiction.

We do have a matter before the court. Of course, with such a large national security investigation, although there are charges before the judicial system, our investigation continues. I'm limited in what I can say, and I must refrain from commenting on specifics or ongoing investigative pieces, but what I can tell you is that we continue to actively investigate and continue to do the work that is required as part of the investigation. Charges have been laid, but we have an ongoing, active investigation.

Mr. Larry Brock: I'll read between the lines with that statement. I thank you for that statement, that potentially there is an affirmative response to the question I put to you, although I'm not asking for any confirmation.

I want to talk briefly about biometrics. Is it only in relation to fingerprints, or are we now advanced in terms of taking a look at facial recognition as part of biometrics?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Mr. Chair, biometrics include the fingerprints. I'll have to confirm whether they do the facial recognition piece, but with biometrics, certainly the information is on the fingerprints.

Mr. Larry Brock: Would you confirm that to committee within a couple of weeks after your appearance?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: We will confirm that.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

We'll go now to Mr. Gaheer for three minutes, please.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing before the committee.

My questions are for Dr. Kochhar from the immigration department.

This essentially started with a visitor visa. An individual was granted a visitor visa. They came to Canada. They applied for asylum.

I want to focus on the security screening process for a visitor visa. I understand that the security screening is trilateral—CSIS, CBSA and IRCC. I'll give you an example. I have lots of cases in my constituency office where an individual has applied for a visitor visa for a family member overseas, potentially from India, let's say, and they have worked in the army or in the local police force. That immigration process, that security screening, can take years. I have cases that have been stuck in limbo for three, four or five years now, just looking at that security screening.

What sorts of security screening are happening overseas? What information is requested? Are interviews conducted? With countries like India or Pakistan, potentially, from which I have a lot of constituents, what information is requested from those local governments? What does that co-operation look like?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: Mr. Chair, let me start by saying what I mentioned earlier, that IRCC is the first line of defence, where we are doing the initial security screening. Based on the risk indicators, we ask the questions. We also have the biometrics availability. We work with our security partners to see what kind of pinging we get from the different databases. We also look at our own databases. Has this person used a different name or alias or different passport? This is all part of the common platform where we begin with the temporary resident visa.

If there is any indication or any flag, we refer it for a comprehensive security screening, which takes place with the CBSA and CSIS. As the IRCC office, we can only make an admissibility decision once the officer is satisfied, after consultation with our security

partners, that there is a favourable return on the security flag or the advance security or comprehensive security screening. If there is not, then we will call it non-admissible and the person will not be allowed to enter into Canada.

As my colleague Ted explained earlier, there are different risk indicators that our security partners work through in terms of their association with different governments and different regimes. That part is actually worked through by our security partners. If it is not available to us or if it is inconclusive, it takes a bit more time before that security or admissibility is actually passed and the person is granted the visa.

I don't know, Ted, if you want to add anything to that one.

• (1155)

Mr. Ted Gullivan: I would just say that military service certainly triggers a deeper dive. We customize the decision based on the person's role, the time period in which they served and whether or not they were a conscript. Again, that's the hard work of the security screening. It's to do a deeper dive on the individual to ascertain their role and what behaviours they engaged in during their period of service.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Just to follow up on that, are investigations conducted—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Gaheer. We're out of time.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: I think the only organization that won't be back at the next meeting is Public Safety. With the others, you may be able to renew these questions then.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor for three minutes.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kochhar, all your colleagues from every department clearly explained the standard process, and they clearly told us that they had done the necessary work in this case, as in all cases. I don't doubt for a moment the competence and good faith of all stakeholders in all departments in this matter. However, like all Quebeckers and Canadians, I can't help but notice that there has been a major failure that has led to the situation that we are studying in committee today. I'm looking for a way to make sure it doesn't happen again. We just want to be constructive here.

How can you explain what has happened? Might there be too many requests for screenings for them to be done in a reasonable time? Are you budget-constrained or short-staffed?

What can be done to improve the efficiency of the screening system?

Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar: I thank the member for his question.

[English]

I would start by saying that first and foremost, volumes do not trump the security, which we place much more...a lot of importance on. Our assessment of the applications is actually taking a very critical look into the security of Canada and into the individuals who are assessed on the security screening component. Volumes do not modify our approach to that.

We continue to see increased volumes. That is for sure. However, we are also dedicating equivalent resources to our security and to our processing, and making sure that we are giving the right attention to the right parameters.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Kochhar. I don't mean to be rude, but I have less than a minute left.

I would ask the same question of Ms. Lloyd.

In your opinion, does the volume of requests or the budget have an impact on the results?

[English]

Ms. Vanessa Lloyd: Thank you.

I will repeat my earlier testimony, honourable member, in that we take the time and go through the steps, which are very robust, that are necessary in order to ensure that we effectively execute our responsibilities with regard to security screening and to ensure the safety and security of Canadians.

I would echo the point that this is a collaborative effort between the three agencies.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Lloyd.

Mr. Larkin, I'll ask you the same question. In your opinion, is the volume of requests too high or are the budgets insufficient?

• (1200)

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: I thank the member for his question.

[English]

Again, the RCMP has a limited involvement in the immigration screening process, and much of it is using technology and innovation. I can tell you that year to date, through automation, we've actually processed more than 3.9 million screening immigration processes. Again, we rely on technology, and we have significant technology and resources to manage the ongoing demand.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: The technology is limited.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: We will go to Mr. MacGregor, please, for three minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Chair, I think we understand very well that there are ongoing internal investigations for this process. Of course, not much can be divulged not only because of the sensitive nature of those investigations but also because there is an ongoing criminal investigation and trial.

From the point of view as legislators, we not only vote on appropriations for each of your agencies but also have an important role in reviewing the policies and the legislation that you operate. Maybe this is a question to the Department of Public Safety. In our review of this case and potentially in making recommendations to the government, are there any gaps that you feel legislators should be addressing in terms of legislative gaps or policy gaps? Are there resource gaps or financial gaps that may help us deal with this issue in the future? Is there anything on which you can inform the committee from a legislator's point of view?

Mr. Shawn Tupper (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Mr. Chair, I think one thing I would offer is to wait and hear from the operational agencies about the review of the process that was followed, particularly the review that CBSA has mentioned in terms of the audit they're doing on a series of files, to confirm that we have the right kinds of structures and processes in place. I think that will be really informative to the committee because it might express where there may be gaps in the process that can be filled. I think that's useful.

I think ongoing dialogues at committee around data and information sharing are pretty critical elements for all of us, particularly for our ability to be more transparent. I think that for future discussions, those elements would be really useful for the committee to consider and to provide advice on.

On the question of resources, just rest assured that for those of us here who, frankly, carry that burden and that weight of responsibility for looking at national security on behalf of Canadians, every single day, our number one priority is to move our resources to focus on those questions, every single day. That is not an issue for us. Being a good public servant, I could say we could always use more money, but I just want you to rest assured that the availability of resources and the capacity to do our jobs is not a question. All of us take that seriously. All of us focus on making sure we have adequate resources to do the job.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

I will leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Thank you to all our witnesses for your forbearance today and for all your hard work. I know some of you might be back in the next meeting, and for the others, I hope to see you another time.

With that, we are adjourned.

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