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# Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 118**

Thursday, September 19, 2024

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Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon





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Thursday, September 19, 2024

• (1550)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 118 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Before we begin, I would ask all in-person participants to read the guidelines written on the updated cards on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. You will also notice a QR code on the card that links to a short awareness video.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. I would like to remind participants of the following points. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair. Members, please raise your hand if you wish to speak, whether participating in person or by Zoom. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

I inform you that the position of first vice-chair is vacant. MP Doug Shipley announced his resignation to me on Monday, September 16.

Thank you, Doug, for your service.

I now give the floor to the clerk so he can proceed with the election. Go ahead, Mr. Clerk.

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Simon Larouche):** Good afternoon.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

[*English*]

I'm now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Please go ahead, Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC):** First of all, I'd like to say thank you for the past year of my being vice-chair. I enjoyed it very much.

I would like to nominate and welcome back my colleague MP Dancho to the position.

**The Clerk:** There is a motion on the floor that Raquel Dancho be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

**The Chair:** All in favour? All opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** It seems to be unanimous.

Welcome back. It's good to have you back.

We shall resume here the business of today. 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 applications.

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, the reasoning of the bail court and any evidence or materials relied upon at the bail hearing are prohibited from disclosure.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses for the first hour. We have the Honourable Marc Miller, PC, MP, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Welcome.

From the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, we have with us Harpreet S. Kochhar, deputy minister; Pemi Gill, assistant deputy minister; Soyoun Park, assistant deputy minister, asylum and refugee resettlement; and Aiesha Zafar, assistant deputy minister, migration integrity.

I now invite Minister Miller to make an opening statement.

Please go ahead, sir.

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello, members and everyone.

I want to first congratulate MP Dancho on becoming first vice-chair and the unanimous nomination by this committee. It's probably one of the few times the committee has voted unanimously on something.

Welcome back to the House of Commons. It's nice to see you.

It's nice to see all of you, for that matter.

I in turn want to echo the words of the Public Safety minister in commending the work of our security and law enforcement partners in apprehending the individuals in question. They've proven yet again that continued collaboration across law enforcement, security and border agencies is essential to keep people safe.

At the same time, I intimately share your serious concerns about the arrest of the two individuals charged in the terrorism attempt in Toronto, Ahmed Eldidi and Mostafa Eldidi. I'm also concerned about the arrest a few weeks ago of Muhammad Khan, a Pakistani national suspected of plotting an attack in New York.

I will provide as much information as possible, and, echoing the instructions of the chair in the ongoing court case, we must remember not to impair the Crown's ability to prosecute the individuals, the accused, and the right of the accused to a fair trial.

[Translation]

On August 28, we provided this committee with a chronology of events. I have also asked my deputy minister to conduct a thorough review of how these two individuals entered Canada, and we are conducting a review of our internal security screening procedures.

The first step is to gather all the facts. Once these elements are in place, Minister LeBlanc and I will move quickly to make the necessary changes to strengthen the system, if necessary. The internal review will be completed in the coming weeks, and the findings and recommendations will be made public.

Before highlighting my department's role in strengthening security screening procedures in Canada, I would like to give you an overview of how my department works with other agencies to protect the country.

• (1555)

[English]

Canadians deserve answers and transparency. It's precisely what all of us aim to provide today. It's why my department provided a chronology of events to this committee regarding Muhammad Khan, in addition to the chronology of events provided in August.

I do want to be clear. Everyone who wants to come to Canada is screened. IRCC works closely with CBSA, with CSIS and with the RCMP to share information and to identify people who may pose a national security risk.

This monitoring occurs in three stages: before the person arrives to Canada, at the port of entry and once in Canada. You heard that from my colleague a few weeks ago.

My department leads on the first stage in collaboration with CBSA and with CSIS. Every applicant for a temporary or a permanent residency is subject to an initial security assessment. We assess their personal information and their history against a set of risk indicators to determine if they could pose a potential threat.

Based on those risk indicators, we identify applicants who warrant further security screening by CBSA or by CSIS. We also confirm their identity and assess admissibility, verifying biometric data such as fingerprints and biographic information against RCMP databases, as well as immigration data held by international partners. That includes our most important partner, the United States.

[Translation]

Immigration officers systematically assess applications based on the criteria set out in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. They may deem someone inadmissible on the basis of criminal activity, human rights violations, national security concerns or misrepresentation. Members of a terrorist organization are inadmissible.

Officers with CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency, conduct another level of screening at entry into Canada. People who misrepresent themselves, use fraudulent documents or are flagged in our system can be refused entry. All adults who claim asylum in Canada undergo extensive security screening by the CBSA and CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

Once individuals are admitted to Canada, security and law enforcement partners work together to manage threats within our borders.

[English]

If applicants violate the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, they risk losing their status and facing removal and criminal charges. As minister, I have the authority to revoke someone's Canadian citizenship if they've obtained it by being dishonest, committing fraud or hiding important information.

With regard to Ahmed Eldidi, his initial temporary resident visa application was refused. This was not for security reasons, as no risk indicators were identified during the initial assessment. Rather, he was deemed a potential non-genuine visitor over concerns that he wouldn't leave Canada at the end of his authorized stay. When he applied again, his application was approved after the officer was satisfied that he intended to visit Canada.

Risk indicators that were flagged along his immigration journey, from his asylum claim to his applications for permanent residency and citizenship, were referred to security partners. A favourable recommendation, as you heard a few weeks ago, was returned each time. No issues were found by the officers that made him inadmissible.

[Translation]

I'm taking this situation very seriously. I fully support my department's review and the discussion today. We are committed to taking all necessary steps to keep everyone safe.

The safety of Canadians is the top priority of this government and of all members of cabinet. Together, we will continue to prevent, detect, and disrupt any suspected terrorist threat or activity. We are also committed to continually reviewing and improving our security apparatus.

[English]

Thank you, Chair.

I'm happy to take your questions.

**The Chair:** We'll start our questions with Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Dancho, please go ahead for six minutes.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here, and thank you for your kind opening words. I appreciate that.

As we know, we have a very serious situation on our hands, Minister. It's the reason you're here. Your government has allowed three alleged terrorists into our country through the immigration streams.

That came ultimately from what we've learned from the RCMP through Globe and Mail reporting. It came within hours of the murdering of an untold number of innocent people—Canadians and Americans—and learning of the latest alleged terrorists who have gained entry into Canada under immigration streams under your watch, sir.

Unfortunately, although it's been several weeks since the first two and a few weeks since the second iteration, we've yet to find out how this happened, and, to my knowledge, you've made no commitments on how you're going to fix it and prevent it from happening again.

What we do know and understand is that your government in the past has directed public servants to fast-track immigration procedures: to cut some corners to bring people in as quickly as possible. Now we have a situation in which we have three alleged terrorists on our hands. It is reasonable to believe that there could be more.

What specific steps have you taken in the past few weeks to ensure no more alleged terrorists can gain entry to Canada through our immigration streams?

● (1600)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Thank you for the question, MP Dancho.

As you know, there are a number of elements about this case that I cannot discuss publicly. I would also not assume a number of facts that are not in evidence currently, but again, we take these incidents extremely seriously. I announced in the French portion of my speech that we should come up with a result of our internal investigation within the next two weeks.

Again, that will be made public. I think the discussion here is to see if and when there was any deficiency and, if there was one, whether it is one that is systematic, and then how we remedy that.

What we will disclose to you in the next two weeks, obviously, we can't disclose today. The investigation is not complete, but we've prepared to disclose it in the next two weeks.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Just to confirm, though, you haven't taken any measures to change any procedures whatsoever. Nothing has changed.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As I've said to you, we are currently investigating if and when there were any deficiencies, and what measures need to be taken.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

With my knowledge of immigration, the procedures are already known. In fact, your department has provided a list of how the procedures are undertaken.

To me, it's very clear that if you can follow the trail over the last number of years, you should be able to determine how it is, for example, that we weren't able to determine that there was a 2015 ISIS video in which one of the alleged terrorists was dismembering a prisoner. Back in 2015, that was circulating on the Internet, yet, three years later, he gained entry to Canada and, in fact, went through six different immigration streams since that time and ultimately gained Canadian citizenship. In that time, there were four red flags flagged for that individual. Three of them were risk indicators. Obviously, none of them were taken seriously, or not to the extent that he was not allowed to continue down the immigration stream.

What I did find interesting, though, Minister, is that in 2018 your government removed the requirement for police background checks—officially called “police clearance certificates”—from the country of origin, from countries like Pakistan. Pakistan ultimately is a bit of a high-risk country, to say the least, and it's puzzling that this was done in 2018. This security check was removed, and now we know that a student visa holder from Pakistan gained entry into Canada.

Have you reinstated this security requirement, for example? That is an easy step that you could have taken by now.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, currently, you know that this individual was an asylum seeker. You know, again, that there are differences with respect to different requirements and the reliability of police certificates at different stages. They vary in their quality, and they play into our risk assessment.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Excuse me. I'm sorry. I may have misspoken, but I'm talking about the student visa holder from Pakistan, the latest alleged terrorist, not the son, but the student visa holder from Pakistan.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'm sorry. Again, this may be within or not within the scope of this discussion, Mr. Chair.

Again, the person, the latest alleged individual, came in as a student from Pakistan—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** That's correct.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** —and the details you have in your chronologies are the ones that I'm not at liberty to speak to at this time.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Minister, but I'm asking specifically about how in 2018 your government removed the requirement for police clearance certificates—ultimately, police background checks—from the country of origin, from countries like Pakistan.

Now we have a student visa holder from Pakistan who I'm assuming did not receive the police clearance certificate—unless you can correct me—but that requirement was removed in 2018. There was a security check removed. That requirement was removed in 2018 from Pakistan for student visa holders.

Now we have a situation in which your government has brought in a student visa holder from Pakistan who is alleged to be a terrorist. He was on his way to Brooklyn, New York, to massacre Jews. That was a situation in which there could have been an additional level of screening that your government removed in 2018. Have you reinstated the security requirement?

I'm hearing that you have not done that. I do feel that it's something quite easy that you could do, which could provide another layer of security, so that this doesn't happen again. Is that not reasonable?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We rely on our security partners to advise us as to the risk profile to take with respect to these individuals.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** It's just a common-sense approach though, is it not?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, you are assuming the reliability and the validity of police certificates, when our screening process is a lot more comprehensive—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I appreciate that, but for permanent residents from Pakistan—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Chair, on a point of order, the practice here is that a question is asked and there is sufficient time for the minister to answer. I would ask that the rule be in place, so that we can actually hear the answer.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Let's let the minister answer the question.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We are confident in the progressive nature of the screening process. Police certificates can be requested.

• (1605)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I do have to interrupt. He has said something that's incorrect.

Permanent residents from Pakistan are required to provide police certificates.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, that's not how this works. The questioner asks the question. The witness has the time to answer, regardless of the opinion of Ms. Dancho.

I would ask that you implement the rules that we all operate under.

**The Chair:** I would agree with Ms. O'Connell on this point.

Could we just let the minister answer?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Perhaps he can answer my question on permanent residence.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'm not sure who is posing the questions or giving the testimony, but I am glad to finish my—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** May I pose the question? Then he can finish and then we're done. I'd appreciate that.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** No, that's not how this works.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I'm sorry, are you the chair? I didn't know that.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Are you?

**The Chair:** Your time is up.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** That is not how this works.

**The Chair:** Can we avoid crosstalk?

I'm sorry. Your time is up.

We'll go now to—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** No, I have 11 seconds left, Chair.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Can we hear the answer, perhaps?

**The Chair:** I have three seconds left for you.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** On permanent residence, are police security checks required from Pakistan, yes or no?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As a matter of course, yes.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Yes, they are. Exactly.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Can we hear the answer?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** He did answer.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** There was a cascade of questions there, Chair.

What I would say is that we are confident in our security screening and the progressive nature of it. We believe that the biometrics that every single student needs to submit, with very few restrictions, give us the confidence we have.

The officers in question can ask for police certificates. Again, there are questions around the validity and the reliability of those certificates.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** It's not required.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We go now to Mrs. Zahid.

You have six minutes, please.

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

Thank you, Minister, for coming on this important issue.

Before I get to my questions, I just want to say that I am very concerned about the rhetoric we saw from some of my Conservative colleagues in the last meeting that we had on this issue.

This is a very serious issue, and all Canadians want us to get answers on the security processes that are in place for people who are seeking to come to Canada, but as leaders we also have a responsibility to choose our words carefully. While we do our work, we must be careful not to cast aspersions on all immigrants or all Canadians from minority communities. Conservative members even sought to tie these cases to the Syrian refugee program, which they know is false. We must not fuel online hatred, which too often becomes real-world violence.

I came to this country as an immigrant to build a better life for my children. In a few days, it will be 25 years for me here. Because Canada is welcoming and a land of opportunity, so have many other people. Canadians from minority groups are too often the target of racism and discrimination.

I ask that we keep that in mind during this study.

Coming to questions, Minister, can you please outline the specific screening measures currently in place to prevent individuals with extremist ties from entering Canada?

Can you please elaborate on the portion of this security screening that the IRCC is responsible for? What happens if IRCC does identify risk indicators on an application?

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** On a point of order, Chair, I purposely waited until my colleague had finished her question.

Could we please get clarification on your ruling about the time to answer? I thought the time allotted to the member was their time to speak and use as they want.

Would you please make a ruling on the time to answer the question, so we don't keep arguing about that going forward?

We've had discussions about this many times. I don't believe it's in the Standing Orders that you have to give the same time to answer as you do to ask a question.

Could you make a ruling on that please, Chair?

**The Chair:** My general practice is to give the witness a chance to answer. If you run out of time right at the end of your six minutes, I will generally give the witness—whoever it is—an opportunity to answer whatever question was last posed.

I will hold the members to their six minutes or whatever the time frame is in the particular instance.

Within that rubric, it is your time. However, I think with Standing Order 18, it's a matter of respect to give people an opportunity to respond properly to the questions you ask, so I will try to adhere to that as well.

We're looking for fairness—a fair question and a fair response. If a question is asked, the witness should be able to answer the question to the best of their ability.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Okay.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Mrs. Zahid, go ahead, please.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** I asked the question.

Minister, you can respond.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Chair, through you, I echo the sentiments of MP Zahid. We would not want aspersions cast on the entire Pakistani community because of the alleged actions of one or another individual—or on the Egyptian community, for that matter. It would be lamentable for that to be the case.

This is a question of some detail, so I will pass over the rest of my time to Aiesha Zafar to answer it, Salma.

**Ms. Aiesha Zafar (Assistant Deputy Minister, Migration Integrity, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you for the question.

The security screening process is a trilateral program. IRCC is definitely the first line, where we look at individuals before they enter Canada. We screen 100% of all applicants who come into Canada. We have the risk indicator packages we talked about before. I'm happy to go into further detail on those.

Those risk indicator packages are not just for individuals who may be engaged in terrorism. They refer to all serious inadmissibilities in IRPA. Those would include our security inadmissibilities, such as terrorism and being a danger to the security of Canada, or someone who may have engaged in acts of violence that would threaten Canadians. It also includes espionage and subversion of a government, for instance. Other serious inadmissibilities include human or international rights violations, war crimes, or organized or serious crime. The risk indicators cover all of what we call “serious inadmissibilities”, of which terrorism might be one.

Our officers are trained on these risk indicator packages. If they notice a risk indicator on an application—again, that risk indicator is like a clue for the officer that there might be more investigation that needs to be done—they refer it to CBSA and CSIS for comprehensive security screening.

Once CBSA and CSIS complete their screening, they will provide back to IRCC a recommendation from a security screening perspective. That recommendation could be favourable—which means they have not identified a serious inadmissibility—non-favourable—which means they have—or inconclusive. An “inconclusive” requires the officer to gather more information until they can be satisfied and make a final determination.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you, Ms. Zafar.

Would it be right to say that IRCC is responsible for identifying risk indicators, and at that point it is passed to Canada's security services?

**Ms. Aiesha Zafar:** The IRCC has risk indicator packages developed by CBSA and CSIS. The officer is responsible for determining whether or not a referral for a comprehensive security screening is required. Then the IRCC officer is responsible for the final decision on that application.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** What steps are being taken to ensure that violent extremists, particularly those linked to international terrorist organizations, do not exploit our immigration system?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Before I answer that question, I want to say, for the record, that the individuals in question had no connection to the Syrian refugee program. If you look at the timeline, it's nonsensical that they would be connected to it. This would have been quite obvious, had people examined the chronology in detail.

I think what has been stressed, and particularly in testimony given to members here by Minister LeBlanc, is the tight and intimate co-operation, security sharing and discipline we have with our security partners—most notably Five Eyes—and our ability to seamlessly get information and act on it quickly. Confidentiality and trust in partners is also capital. The resources within each member that comprises the Five Eyes and our other partners are key to acting quickly.

In this case, things worked. Our security agencies worked. For that, I thank them. There is a reason we have a threefold approach to security in this country: outside the country, at the border and inside. In this case, it worked, and we should be quite proud of it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Zahid.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, thank you for being here.

I would like to welcome back our colleague Ms. Dancho.

I missed a few committee meetings on the subject, unfortunately, so I don't know if the topics I want to bring up have already been discussed. Whatever the case may be, it will be the first time they will be addressed in your presence, Mr. Minister.

You said that the purpose of today's discussion was to determine whether there had been any failures in your department throughout the process. If we look at the chronology of events, we see that there were risk indicators at certain times with regard to the father. I think this is the kind of red flag that can be raised in an immigration process. In some cases, no further investigation was conducted, even though a risk indicator had been raised. Earlier, Ms. Zafar said that normally, when there is a risk indicator, a more in-depth investigation is conducted, but that doesn't seem to have been the case a few times in this matter.

When you look at the chronology of events, do you feel that there was a failure in those areas? Should there have been more thorough investigations at certain points in the process? There was more than one risk indicator on more than one occasion. That could have raised red flags.

What is your assessment today, when you look at the chronology of events?

• (1615)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** That's a very good question.

First, you will hear the findings of our internal review in a few weeks. If there were breaches, you'll know then whether they were systemic in nature and what corrections need to be made, if any.

Second, it's very important to point out that a red flag isn't automatically an indicator of terrorism. It may be something that can be remedied or a question that can be answered. It may not be a risk per se.

What I do know is that, at the time of the decision, the officers hadn't received any information indicating that this person could not be admitted to Canada. Far be it from me to question that conclusion. Obviously, we're here today for a reason. Checks need to be done, and that's why the deputy minister, Harpreet S. Kochhar, is conducting an internal review. We take that very seriously.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you.

I'd like to raise another relevant point. I don't know if you can tell us about the normal immigration process in Canada. Let's take the example of a person from outside Canada applying for a visitor visa. Most of the time, does the person claiming asylum do so immediately upon arrival at a Canadian port of entry? Is that a consistent practice? Can they claim asylum a few months later, when their visitor visa expires?

What's the current standard for this type of immigrant?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mathematically speaking, as you can imagine, the standard is that the vast majority of people who come here do so legitimately, in accordance with the grounds they've submitted to the officers and to our government.

Some practices are increasingly common among asylum seekers, whether they make a claim at the airport or later. These days, people who claim asylum at the airport do so mainly at Montréal-Trudeau International Airport or at Pearson.



That said, these aren't exclusively cases where people come here and immediately claim asylum. One example that's been in the media is when students come here to study for a year and then make a refugee claim. They can do so after a few months of reflection. The timeline is sometimes questionable, especially when the person is well established here and suddenly makes a refugee claim. Despite everything, under the current legal system, these people are entitled to a fair process, and that is what we're doing.

The trend we're seeing these days is that people who are here on a visa, regardless of what kind of visa it is, are claiming asylum from Canada. This is happening more and more. It may be because they are in a precarious situation, because their visa is expiring or for other reasons.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** I ask because, as you say, it can be questionable when a person claims asylum a few months after arriving in the country. In this case, that's exactly what the father did. He didn't claim asylum when he arrived at Pearson airport.

I was talking to my colleague who is the immigration critic and who knows a lot more about this than I do. After looking at the chronology of events, he told me that this element would already have been enough to raise a red flag: Why is this person claiming asylum a few months after arriving?

I don't know if you can give us an answer, but has anyone in your department asked any questions? There are probably too many files for you to know about, but I know this one is of particular interest to you. When you look at the chronology of events after the fact, and you see that a few months separate the time of the individual's entry into the country and the time of their asylum claim, do you think that perhaps something irregular should have been seen at that time?

• (1620)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** In the normal course of events, it's the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada that decides that. Obviously, it has to do with human behaviour. The people who review these files look at the context in which the request was made. That can certainly change their decision-making.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[English]

We'll go now to Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead, please, for six minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before our committee today to help us answer some questions on this particular and very serious situation.

This is similar to what was just asked of you with respect to the chronology, and I know you are awaiting an internal investigation, but I'm curious. When you have your conversations with Minister LeBlanc in his role as Minister of Public Safety and you look at these timelines, thank God CSIS, the RCMP and the CBSA acted when they did. The fact that these individuals were apprehended,

that they are in custody, I guess to some extent shows that the system worked. When you're having your conversations with Minister LeBlanc, there's also the fact that they got into Canada.

When you're taking the totality of that chronology and the fact that it did end in success, are you satisfied that the system worked? Are you satisfied that this is an overall success? Can you opine for the committee on what your initial findings are between you and the minister?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The responsibility that Minister LeBlanc and I have is almost unimaginable. At times we are privy to information related to the national security of our country that most Canadians aren't. Obviously, I'm never satisfied. I am happy that the men and women in uniform were able to apprehend these individuals and were able to act quickly on the information that was shared with them, like they do when they share information with people abroad about activities that may come under their eyes again. We can't speak to it.

Clearly, when we do see a chronology like this, when information is imparted to us on a confidential, secret basis, we do ask a number of questions. We don't simply take stock in the fact that these people were caught. We look at the process and what went right and what could have gone wrong. Again, it requires facts. Hyperbole is fine, but it doesn't solve the problem. There's no magic wand in this case to apprehending an individual. It's multilayered. Ideally, you apprehend people before they even come into the country, assuming there are no activities that turn them into different people in the country. These are all assumptions that we have to deal with, and to get to the heart of that, we actually have to get the facts.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Are you finding that these individuals are obviously motivated by an ideology to commit these crimes that they were in advanced stages of planning in some cases? Overall, is your government finding that this radicalization is happening abroad, or is it happening after they've come to Canada, or is it a bit of both? Is there anything you can speak to on that? I think deradicalization efforts are also an important part of the parcel here.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'd say, speaking very generally, it's probably a bit of both. We shouldn't think that radicalization doesn't occur in Canada. Terrorist networks and criminality networks work together. They use these as tools to perpetrate horrible crimes on innocent people. We've seen increased hate—anti-Semitic and Islamophobic hate, particularly in the current context—and that does impact behaviour, sometimes of younger cohorts of the population as well, as we've seen in some other apprehensions. To answer your question quite succinctly, it's a bit of both.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I just want to get in one more question, if I can.

I think you're lucky that I'm speaking to you here today and not the person who does casework in my office, because our office has a lot of frustration with the immigration and citizenship file. We're certainly very familiar with how long it can take to do a security check, and I understand the necessity of that.

However, there are probably a lot of families who are looking at the situation, who have gone through all of the formal procedures, done everything correctly and played by the rules, and are still waiting. They see this happen. As a minister, this is your chance to take accountability, and what would you say to those families?

• (1625)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We're seeing, MP MacGregor, an unprecedented volume of people who want to come to Canada. It's not a right, it's a privilege. For those who successfully go through the comprehensive screening process, for whatever reason they're coming to Canada, whether it's just a visit or to become a permanent resident and eventually a Canadian citizen, they do have to go through these processes, and we take them quite seriously.

This is a service delivery ministry, and when things go slowly, it's frustrating. When we're not in current processing time, it's frustrating. I can act sometimes in my role to see what's going on in individual files. Indeed, with your interactions with my team, you've seen that we're quite responsive.

However, the one thing we won't compromise on is the security checks. We will never get involved in fettering or waiving the work of our trained professionals to screen these people. They have limited resources, and when there are limited resources and there is the volume that we're seeing, it does take time. It's immensely frustrating for people who perhaps have no issues with their files, but I really can't fetter the discretion of our well-trained agents.

**The Chair:** You have 25 seconds.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I'm okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We'll start our second round of questions at this point with Ms. Lantsman, please.

You have five minutes.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Thank you for being here, Minister.

Since our last meeting, another ISIS terrorist was arrested, and a plot was foiled. You alluded to that in your opening commentary about Mr. Khan.

You previously told Canadians that there were criminal background checks for temporary residents. There's actually no requirement for a police certificate. I'm going to go back to that, because you were very unclear.

In 2018, the government removed.... That means it doesn't require the police background checks; those are police clearance certificates from some countries of origin. In the case we're talking about, Pakistan is included in that, and it turns out that the student to whom your incompetent predecessor gave a visa is part of that. You removed the security checks. Your government removed the security checks.

You know that this guy was arrested. You know that a terrorist plot was foiled, with the help of U.S. intelligence. You know that he was off to Brooklyn to kill Jews. Have you reinstated that requirement for security checks that you previously told Canadians was in place?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Mr. Chair, I don't want to, in answer, give the impression that I'm validating a number of the alleged facts that I cannot speak about publicly.

I think my question to you, MP Lantsman, is this: Should we assume that, were police certificates to have been attained, we would have apprehended this individual? We are confident in the way our biometric system works and the progressive screening that operates in our country, and I think we should disabuse ourselves of the notion that Canada is hermetically sealed and that but for one procedure we would have stopped something. It's highly theoretical. It's quite speculative.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** It's actually not, Minister.

I'm going to jump in, because you require those police certificates for permanent residents. No, whether you know that or not, that's a fact and it's the case. Therefore, why wouldn't you require them for student visas? This is how this guy got in. You can ask your predecessor, Sean Fraser. He let him in.

I know you're cleaning up a mess whereby I think this government has ruined a generational consensus on immigration. However, why do you take them for permanent residents and not student visas? Why is there a different security check, if this is the terrorist plot that was foiled under this guy?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Not everyone who comes to this country is entitled to become a permanent resident of Canada or, indeed, a citizen. We take a progressive risk assessment approach. The approach works. I'm not saying it's perfect. Again, you're assuming a lot of facts that are not in evidence to draw a conclusion that may not have been what you assumed in the first—

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** What are you talking about? There was an arrest made for an ISIS plot by a terrorist who was about to kill people. The Minister of Public Safety.... The last time that happened, which was just weeks before that arrest, another two people were arrested. A guy was in an ISIS snuff video. He went through six different channels of immigration with four flags. He was checked six times by this country, and he was given citizenship.

What on earth are you talking about? These are two terrorists. How can you assure Canadians that there are no more if you don't understand your own department?

• (1630)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, let me repeat, and I cannot deviate, because, as you'll well appreciate, there is a criminal case going on—

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** You talked about it in your opening statement.

**The Chair:** Ms. Lantsman—

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** I'm asking you a question.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You've introduced to this committee a number of alleged facts that I cannot speak to, and I don't want to—

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** It's a fact. You lied about it on TV.

**The Chair:** Ms. Lantsman—

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** Ms. Lantsman, this language is unparliamentary. I would ask you to apologize.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** I will retract that.

You misled Canadians about it on TV.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Again, Mr. Chair, through you, as indicated in the chronologies, I do want to speak to the decision-making of the officers in question. It was determined there was no evidence presented to the decision-makers themselves at the time that would have rendered these individuals inadmissible.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:** You're missing evidence. You don't require that evidence. The least you can do is require that evidence, given that a terrorist plot was foiled. There have been two in the last month and a half. There has been one since Minister LeBlanc sat there and said the system is working as it should. Clearly there's something wrong, and we have to make sure that you can assure Canadians that this won't happen again, and you've remedied nothing.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'm failing to understand the argument. If the argument is that requiring police certificates would have dispensed of all the investigative work and the work done by our officers to foil this plot, I would submit, respectfully, no.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lantsman.

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

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

Minister, thank you for appearing before the committee.

Immigration has certainly been in the news a lot for the past year. I think generally we do have a great immigration system, and tweaks are needed from time to time. You're certainly making those tweaks now, and they're very welcome.

I want to ask about this particular case. I want to make the point that, as an office that deals with a very high level of immigration work, for every one individual who gains temporary access to Canada to visit, there are multiple more who are denied on the merits of the file itself.

However, for cases when there is limited or unreliable data from the country of origin, how does your department handle that?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** That's an excellent question. I'm going to ask Aiesha to tackle that.

**Ms. Aiesha Zafar:** You're right that there are certain places where the information that may be available is less reliable, but our officers need to be satisfied that an individual is not inadmissible to Canada so that they don't pose any threat and they don't have any inadmissibilities.

Working closely with our security partners, such as CBSA and CSIS, as well as through our partnerships with our Five Eyes and other international partners, we're able to collect information that can help strengthen the inadmissibility assessment of any applicant.

If the officer is not satisfied, they can continue to ask for more information. For instance, they may require things such as police certificates, employment history or documents that will allow the officer to be satisfied that the individual does not pose a risk to Canada.

In addition to that, we collect biometrics. Biometrics are an important part of the immigration system, because they're not just for a security screening purpose where we're identifying if there's criminality; they're also to anchor identity. It's the first time we might see an individual, and using those biometrics and sharing those with our partners also helps us understand identity and determine if there's any derogatory information that exists on that individual.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll go to Madame Michaud, on a point of order.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Just before the minister gave the floor to Ms. Zafar, her microphone was off, so we didn't get the French interpretation of her answer. Could he repeat the few words he said, so that we can have the interpretation?

[English]

**The Chair:** I would ask the minister to repeat that answer.

• (1635)

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'd be happy to do that.

As my colleague said, there are a number of additional pieces of information that we can request. One thing that wasn't said in her answer in English that I would add is that we can also ask for interviews. If there are risk indicators, we can request police certificates. I didn't want to minimize their importance, but I also didn't want to digress as your Conservative colleagues have done. If additional information is needed, there are a number of ways to proceed.

Biometrics is also a very important component. This is a rather new practice, historically speaking, for screening people who come here to Canada. It's very reliable. It's not perfect, but we verify that data by comparing it with the databases of IRCC and our security partners, whether in Canada or abroad.

That may not be the most reliable interpretation of my colleague's answer, but I did my best.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Gaheer, I'll give you a few extra seconds.

**Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, what about a case where, let's say, the individual in question does not have a criminal history; the biometrics come back clean; if there's an interview conducted, that interview is good. They seem like a decent person, but somewhere online, on the dark web—whatever that means—there's a video of them engaging in these kinds of acts. Millions of people want to come to this country, possibly billions, right? Is it possible, even theoretically, to search every single video and every single audio clip that's available online for every single individual who wants to come to Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'd love to give you my answer on that, MP Gaheer, but it really is up to our security services to speak to the nature and quality of that search. I think they would say it's becoming increasingly easier, but it's still something that is quite difficult and not necessarily routine, especially for clean matters with no flags.

**The Chair:** You may ask one more quick question to make up for the time.

**Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer:** Do the officials have data on how many individuals are denied, possibly every single month, or in the past year?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We don't have it offhand, but we can provide it to the committee.

**Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer:** I'd like to see that, because it highlights just how strict our system is and how hard it actually is—despite people's feelings—to get a visitor visa to come to Canada.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gaheer.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, I know you said that your findings would soon be made public and that we'd find out whether there had been any breaches and, if so, what improvements need to be made. I tend to agree with what was said earlier, that if there were three examples, there may be others. It shows that there may indeed be a gap in the system, and that there may be a need to improve the processes, the security screening and the trilateral program that you talked about.

I can't help but notice that there are more and more permanent residents in Canada and immigration applications. The system is overloaded. As my NDP colleague said, we experience it every day

at our constituency offices. We are working with citizens who have been waiting years for their cases to be resolved. Because it's an extremely long process, it's difficult to imagine that shortcuts are being taken to get the work done more quickly. There's a tendency to think of it as a complex and rigorous process. However, when we see cases like this one, we think that it may not be so rigorous, ultimately, and that the process may have been carried out too hastily in some cases.

So what's your observation today? Do you intend to improve the safety system?

Fortunately, disaster was averted thanks to CSIS and the police. However, I don't think we should wait for another disaster to improve or tighten up the immigration process, if that's where there was a gap.

I'd like to hear your comments on that.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes, you're absolutely right, but I wouldn't presume that it's not happening right now either. Terrorist and criminal organizations are very sophisticated, and we have to adapt in real time. This is being done gradually, not only within my department, but also within security agencies. If changes need to be made, we'll let you know in the coming weeks.

Of course, we have to be on the lookout. Canada isn't the only country facing this kind of attack. I don't think it reassures anyone to say that it was an exceptional case. We have an obligation to deliver results. It's a disaster. We all have a responsibility, especially if someone loses their life. So I commend the security agencies for their timely intervention, but it's not necessarily something I'm entirely satisfied with.

● (1640)

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[English]

We go now to Mr. MacGregor.

You have two and a half minutes, please.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister Miller, I did take note of your comment that there is no compromise on security, absolutely. I was just curious, though, because in your department's most recent annual report, there is reference to automation technologies being used to help streamline. Do those automation technologies ever intersect with the security screening, and do you have any concerns that it might lead to a gap in the future?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** When it comes to automation, I think the clear conclusion is that it can in no time be a shortcut to any matters of security, particularly those of national security. They aim to speed up the process, for sure, but without compromising these strict security parameters. That's something we have to constantly adjust and adapt to, particularly with the looming use and leveraging of AI and people seeking to come into this country. I think that's a worry that we are looking at and need to be ready for. This is a department that was criticized, I think rightly, for doing a lot by hand. That human aspect can make some errors, but I think the automation can also make some.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I want to get one more in. I think the information leading to the Eldidi arrest may have come from French intelligence. Hopefully, one day, Canada can return the favour and provide intelligence to our allies that prevents a terror attack abroad.

From your position as a Minister of Immigration, I know there's still an internal review going on, but are you fairly satisfied that our international information sharing, particularly amongst our allies, is as robust as it could be?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I don't think anyone in my position can ever be satisfied. I am confident, though, with significant confidence, that our information agencies are doing their utmost to share. The sharing of information is critical. If we don't have that information, we can't cross-correlate or verify. In order to draw conclusions in a specific case, you would have to put into evidence a number of facts that would qualify why a particular agency may have had some information that was shared and perhaps why we didn't have it.

Again, it's hard to openly speculate on that currently, but again, looking at the set of facts, I'm confident that we acted quickly and that we did the right thing.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Minister, you've been here an hour. We have a five-minute slot and a five-minute slot. I wonder if we can prevail upon you to stay for those.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I have a competing engagement.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister, for being here.

In that case, we will suspend and bring in the next panel.

• (1640) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1645)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

Thank you, all. We'll resume the meeting at this point.

I would like to welcome the new officials joining the officials from IRCC at the table.

From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Ted Gallivan, executive vice-president. From the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Vanessa Lloyd, interim director. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Michael Duheme, commissioner.

Welcome, everyone. Thank you for being here.

We'll start straight away with questions. This panel has no opening statements.

We'll go first to Ms. Dancho. Please, go ahead.

• (1650)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the officials for being with us today on this very important topic.

I'll start with immigration, on the 2018 removal of the requirement for police clearance certificates from the country of origin. Pakistan was one of those countries. Is there consideration being given by the department to reinstating the requirement—not the option, but that it be required for Pakistan and others that may have been impacted by the 2018 change?

Is that being considered by the department?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar (Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you for the question, Chair.

I think the minister pointed out that we are going to do a full evaluation of what transpired and, based on all the information received, what we can do better. If there are things we need to do differently, we will consider them.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** You can't commit to that. I appreciate that you can't. Thank you very much.

Can you confirm for me—I think the minister did—that permanent residence requires police certificate clearance from countries like Pakistan, but student visas do not. Is that correct?

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Can I please turn to Aiesha on that one? I want to be very sure about that.

**Ms. Aiesha Zafar:** Thank you for the question.

Permanent residents are asked for police certificates. There's a difference in the threat and the risk level for temporary residents when they're coming for a temporary purpose, so there are different requirements for those coming for a temporary stay versus a permanent stay.

Permanent residents have different requirements—more enhanced, in fact—because of the rights that would be provided to them and their ability to stay in Canada.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I appreciate that you described the certificate clearance as a “more enhanced” screening measure. It's my understanding that you used the words “more enhanced”. Is that correct?

**Ms. Aiesha Zafar:** I should correct myself. It's not necessarily more enhanced. There are different expectations, perhaps, for an officer, because now they are assessing a different type of resident.

When they're assessing somebody who's coming here for a temporary stay, they will request all of the information and documents they need for that duration of stay. When we have a permanent resident, or perhaps a citizen, they will ask for the appropriate documentation that would satisfy them, based on the fact that they would have different rights in Canada.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I would just ask, as the official opposition critic for public safety, that in your review you strongly reconsider reimplementing or putting in place whatever additional measures we can to ensure that there's extra screening. I ask that you please do so, as I'm sure you are doing.

I want to ask the RCMP a few questions as well. My understanding is that you got your hands on the alleged ISIS video from 2015 of that individual being dismembered. What was your next course of action? Was it to inform the IRCC, or was it to inform CSIS?

Who found out first, and who told whom? I'm just trying to establish it briefly in one minute, if you can tell me.

**Commr Michael Duheme (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Mr. Chair, my recollection is that the RCMP did not have that video initially.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** At no time. That's interesting.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** At no time...when it was shared and it became known.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** What about the CBSA?

**Mr. Ted Gallivan (Executive Vice-President, Canada Border Services Agency):** The CBSA took a copy of the video, further to media reports. It's a copy we took in the context of lessons learned and opportunities to improve, going forward.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** You didn't know about it until the media reports.

**Mr. Ted Gallivan:** That's correct.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Neither the CBSA nor the RCMP was aware.

Was CSIS aware? I guess you can't speak for CSIS. I'm so sorry. You can. Of course you can. I apologize.

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

I believe in our last session we spoke about the requirements to be careful about what is shared between the agencies in the context of the ongoing investigation.

I would point the honourable member to the chronology and the reference that as soon as CSIS became aware of threat information, which was in June 2024, we began to take action to mitigate the threat.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you very much, ma'am.

Chair, with my remaining 30 seconds, I'm going to give the floor to MP Shipley.

Thank you.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Dancho, for this time.

Chair, I would like to move the motion that I put on notice the other day, please, in regard to lengthening this study. I just want to make this a very short preamble, and, hopefully, we can get back to—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Which motion? You did several motions, I believe.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** I can read it out. I have it here. It states:

Given that the RCMP have arrested an additional alleged ISIS terrorist, who was preparing to carry out a massacre targeting the Jewish community in New York City, the committee expand its Review of the Foiled Terrorist Plot in Toronto and of the Security Screening Process for Permanent Residence and Citizenship Application by no fewer than eight meetings to further examine how alleged ISIS terrorists are able to enter and reside in Canada; that the Minister of Public Safety and his officials be invited to reappear for no less than two hours; that IRCC officials, CBSA officials, RCMP officials and CSIS officials be invited to reappear before the committee; and that no more than one minister, agency or department testify at a time.

I'll speak very briefly to this, because, as I was saying, Chair, I really do want to get back to our study at hand. Obviously, I'm looking for more time. We're finding a lot of information here, but there's a lot of information yet to come out. One of the interesting things that the minister, just in the last hour, mentioned was that there will be findings in a few weeks of their study. That would be great to be able to bring up in this study that we're doing here. That's one of the other reasons we want to lengthen this.

Therefore, I hope all of our committee members can agree to this. I'm not going to go on long about this. Hopefully, we can agree that this is an important study. Canadians need this. There are some fears out there right now. We need to make sure there are going to be some corrections coming. I'll leave that on the floor. Hopefully, this passes.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

We go now to Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to move an amendment to this. I'll just read the entire motion, which begins as Mr. Shipley has put it on the record:

Given that the RCMP have arrested an additional alleged ISIS terrorist, who was preparing to carry out a massacre targeting the Jewish community in New York City, the committee expand its Review of the Foiled Terrorist Plot in Toronto and of the Security Screening Process for Permanent Residence and Citizenship Application to include questions around this more recent arrest in its meetings.

I'd like to speak to my amendment.

**The Chair:** Is your amendment ending the paragraph there?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** The difference is that it ends after "Permanent Residence and Citizenship Application" and adds "to include questions around this more recent arrest in its meetings."

**The Chair:** Okay. The remaining text—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** It's deleted.

**The Chair:** It's deleted. Okay.

We are on the amendment now—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I'm sorry. I'd like to speak to my amendment.

**The Chair:** I apologize.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you. I was just making sure everyone was caught up.

The rationale, Mr. Chair, is the fact that throughout this meeting, in the context of the original motion, the minister was asked questions about this third alleged terror plot. He answered those questions. There were two rounds by Conservatives. All parties had a chance to ask on that. There were no objections raised by us, although it was outside, technically, the scope of the meeting. However, these are important questions that Canadians want answers to. We have all of the agencies listed in the original motion here now. Had the member not interrupted the meeting, they would have had the opportunity to ask those very questions.

We have absolutely no issue with expanding the scope, but all of those questions can be posed to the individuals who have been listed and to the responsible agencies. Therefore, I would hope that there is support around the table for this amendment to just ensure that the scope is expanded. However, the Conservatives, if they want to just take over the committee, to not allow us to actually conduct our business and ensure that all parties have the opportunity to ask appropriate questions, if they just want to filibuster the rest of the meeting, that's going to be on them, but we are certainly supportive of expanding the scope as we already have in the previous panel.

Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll ask for a recorded vote on my amendment.

**The Chair:** Okay. Are there any...?

Ms. Michaud.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Before we continue the debate on the amendment or proceed to the vote, could we have a version of the amendment in both languages, either by email or on paper? I didn't quite catch it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Do we have that available?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I just amended it on my paper, so I'll have to just—

• (1700)

**The Chair:** We'll suspend for a few minutes and get that under way.

• (1700)

(Pause)

• (1707)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting back to order.

Ms. O'Connell spoke.

Madame Michaud was next.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Michaud.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The reason I wanted to speak at the outset was to get the French version, but now I have it.

In addition, during the break, there were discussions among the parties. I'll let my colleagues go first. I'll speak afterwards.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. MacGregor.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Yes, similar to what Ms. Michaud just said, we've had some conversations. I think one of my concerns is that, number one, officials are operating.... They can't tell us everything about these cases. They also don't want to impede the prosecution's ability in the court case. We are also awaiting an interim report. With all those factors in mind, I think we've come to an agreement.

I'll also cede my time, so we can progress to the next speakers.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Ms. Dancho, I believe you're next.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Chair.

There are a few things. We have had discussions. I'll propose it to our Liberal colleagues shortly.

First of all, I would say that this amendment by Ms. O'Connell does change the scope of the motion that we put forward. My understanding is that it's not admissible, then. If you're changing the scope of the motion with an amendment, it doesn't work. It's just not how this works is my understanding. It just changes it.

I just wanted to point that out. I'm not going to stick to it, but the amendment fundamentally changes what we were asking for. My understanding is that's not appropriate for amendments. I will leave it there, but the next time there is an amendment to a motion, we should just make sure that that is being followed.

We do have an alternative proposal, but I don't believe I can make an amendment to an amendment.

Is that correct?

**The Chair:** You can make a subamendment to an amendment.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** That's right. You are correct. Thank you very much to both of you for confirming that. It's been about a year, so I'm a little rusty.

I would like to propose, I suppose, a subamendment, but first I'll just discuss it, and then I'll move the subamendment.

I recognize that we have had officials' time to come, and we very much appreciate that. Also, the minister has made quite clear—and Minister LeBlanc alluded to this as well, of course, and it's been public—that there are ongoing investigations in Immigration, CSIS and the RCMP, and CBSA are also involved in that. According to what the minister said today, he made it sound like in quite short order, a number of weeks, I believe was the quote, that would be concluded. He several times alluded to how we may have answers by then. I appreciate that there's an investigation, and Canadians expect that.

To give that a little bit of time, I think what we would propose is—since we've already agreed as a committee to have three additional meetings outside this current one, so three extra was already agreed to—rather than ask for more, we would amend the original motion, or this one, whatever works best, to say that both the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Immigration would come respectively for two hours each, plus officials. That's what would be included in those remaining three meetings. The ministers would each come for two hours themselves, plus officials. That way we can ask them questions in response to the investigation.

It is a bit like we're hitting a wall, and I think the Jewish community and others deserve answers on this. We've been hitting that “it's under investigation” wall. I would like to give the minister an opportunity to respond once he can tell us more about the findings, and I would like the Minister of Public Safety—I believe he would agree to it—to come back and answer once he has more information as well.

Our proposal is that. I could amend this motion or I could amend the original one, whatever you think would be better.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Let me understand.

The motion is amended by Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I could move a subamendment in it.

**The Chair:** What I understand is, you would like to add to that—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I can move a subamendment. That's what I'm asking about. I just want to make sure that's what you would prefer logistically.

**The Chair:** You want to add to that amendment as one option that we invite both ministers individually to appear for two hours each in the remaining three meetings.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** It's once we have more information. I would include in that in a couple weeks. If months go by, just in the spirit of this, and if it's taking a long time.... I'm sure it may, but again, he said weeks, and I'd like us to stick to that.

**The Chair:** We can—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I don't want it to be April 2025, and we still haven't heard a thing. Canadians deserve answers now.

**The Chair:** I understand. You can get back at us and hold our feet to the fire on that, absolutely.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** All right.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Perhaps I could get clarification on what the subamendment actually is, then, because it's a rambling of taking and moving.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I haven't actually moved it yet.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Is the subamendment that the remaining three meetings be the ministers for two hours each, when the reports or when the findings are completed?

**The Chair:** That's my understanding.

Is that correct, Ms. Dancho?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I'd like to know before we vote on anything.

**The Chair:** She hasn't formally moved the motion.

Do we understand that correctly?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Please repeat it.

**The Chair:** In the remaining three meetings of the current study, you are proposing to amend Ms. O'Connell's amendment to invite each of the two ministers to appear for two hours each.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Plus officials.

**The Chair:** Plus officials.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** That's for a total of three meetings.

**The Chair:** That's for a total of three meetings. There would be one other meeting. It would be one minister for one meeting, one minister for another meeting—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** —and officials.

**The Chair:** —and officials.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** Then we have Goodale.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** No, that's not what they said. This is why, with motions, if there's going to be a subamendment, we should have a subamendment moved and then speak to it.

The subamendment, as I've heard it just now, is three more meetings with each minister and officials after the reports are completed.

**The Chair:** I'll let you move the motion.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Sure.

**The Chair:** I should advise the committee that we do have Ralph Goodale confirmed for next week.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Perfect.

**The Chair:** That would take up a third meeting for one hour for next week.

If you would like to move your subamendment, we'll get things squared away.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll move it momentarily. I just recall that when I was on this committee last, we were able to work together. Despite not agreeing on a lot, we were able to get a lot of work done. Therefore, in an effort to do that, I would like to move a subamendment to Ms. O'Connell.... Again, given that we didn't have notice of the amendment, I'll do the best I can to make it make sense.

I'll just read hers, and then I'll give it my best shot:



Given that the RCMP have arrested an additional alleged ISIS terrorist, who was preparing to carry out a massacre targeting the Jewish community in New York City, the committee expand its Review of the Foiled Terrorist Plot in Toronto and of the Security Screening Process for Permanent Residence and Citizenship Application to include questions around this more recent arrest in its meetings, and invite both the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Immigration to return for two hours respectively with officials, once the investigative findings have progressed.

I think that may be the best open-ended word, sir.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Is that clear to everybody?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Chair, could we get the French version of the subamendment by email? I think the clerk is writing it up.

I really like the idea of putting this off until we get the answers the minister was talking about. It would allow us to move forward with other work we have on the table. In particular, we have two study reports to check, one on car theft and one on the transfer of offenders. I think that would be agreeable to everybody. I don't know whether the clerk, after sending us the proposal, could tell us what's on the table for our upcoming meetings.

I want to make sure that everyone understands that it's three meetings, in other words, a meeting next week with Mr. Goodale for the first hour and with the officials for the second hour, a meeting with Minister Miller and a meeting with Minister LeBlanc.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That's pretty good and pretty close.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** I'm sorry. I'm confused.

**The Chair:** We're going to get the subamendment out there.

Currently, we have Mr. Goodale scheduled for next Thursday. My thought was that on Tuesday, we would work on the auto theft study. We have Mr. Goodale for only one hour on Thursday, and we haven't really lined up anybody else for the second hour, because we've actually gone through the whole list of witnesses from the original motion. I would suggest, because I think these fine folk here are dying to tell us more information, that perhaps we can invite them back for the second hour with Mr. Goodale.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Chair, that's not what's on the floor, with all due respect. There was an amendment moved that we must deal with. To then propose other new versions of it is up to the committee to decide.

I would like to get back to the witnesses at hand. We've prepared for this.

If you want to hold a subcommittee meeting to discuss the planning, we can do so. However, that's not appropriate now, when we have an amendment and a subamendment.

**The Chair:** The discussion I'm having has nothing to do with the amendments.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** That's right, but—

**The Chair:** The amendments are in process.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Then let us go back to questioning.

**The Chair:** Once the subamendment is distributed, we will have a discussion on it and vote on it.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Then we should pause until we have the wording.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough. We'll suspend.

• (1715)

(Pause)

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Okay, everyone, we'll begin with the amendment to the amendment. Everyone have a quick look at that. Are there any more speakers to the subamendment? The subamendment is in blue.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Chair, I have a point of order.

The “28 days of the adoption of this motion, or whichever is sooner”, was not said on the record, and you can't move a subamendment to an amendment, so we'd have to vote on the amendment—

**An hon. member:** Or you could get UC. Either way, I'm going to get to it.

**The Chair:** You can't move an amendment to a subamendment.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Right, but what was said on the record, which we were just getting translated during the break, the additional language we were attempting to add, was not said on the record, so that can't be included in what we're voting on now.

If, at the conclusion of those votes, someone wants to move that further, then they can do so, but that's not on the record.

**The Chair:** I think that's a fair point. I'll take that point.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you.

I agree that it's a fair point. We can vote on what was said—and I know the clerk typed that up—and then I will propose that either way, so we can do it quickly or we can do it slowly.

I believe some of the other parties are in agreement with the 28 days, just to ensure some accountability. We can do it whichever way you'd like. We can either do UC and allow me to just make that edit, or I can try to do it after, but either way, it's going to take longer the second way. I'm game for either.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Okay, so are we clear on what the original subamendment is without this other additional text?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay. Are we ready to vote on that subamendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I'm sorry, but is it this one that's been sent around or what I said?

**The Chair:** It's what you said.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay, well then I'm going to speak after. I'm on the speaking list for after.

**The Chair:** All right.

Are there any more speakers on the subamendment, as it was said? Seeing none, let's call a vote on the subamendment.

(Subamendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now we're back to the amendment as subamended.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, sir.

I would like to move just a very brief, quick subamendment to the subamendment we just passed to Ms. O'Connell's amendment. I'm getting confused by how many amendments we're working on, but I think you know what I mean. Ultimately, I would just say that, to what we just passed, I would add at the end the following: "or within 28 days of the adoption of this motion, whichever is sooner". I believe that's in order.

[*Translation*]

I think I've explained my proposal correctly.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, so on Ms. Dancho's second subamendment, are we clear?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Yes, and the purpose is, Mr. Chair, just to ensure some accountability on this—just to be clear on what I'm putting forward, we've agreed that we'll bring the ministers back for two hours each and a few other things there in what we just passed, but we're just adding some accountability to it. Either we hear from the ministers for some investigation or in 28 days they both come back and talk to us, so it's just to be clear.

**The Chair:** Also, to be clear, we can't compel the ministers to show up on a particular day.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** We can politely ask.

**The Chair:** We will always politely ask.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Is there any further discussion on Ms. Dancho's second subamendment? Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

(Subamendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Okay, so now we're on the amendment as doubly subamended. Is there any discussion on the amendment as amended? Seeing none, I'll call the vote on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Okay, so now we go back to the motion itself as—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** No, we just did that. We did the subamendment, the amendment, and then the motion as—

**The Chair:** That was your amendment as amended.

We now go back to the original motion as amended. Is there any discussion?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Very well. Okay.

Go ahead, please, Ms. Damoff.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Chair.

Before I get to my questions with the witnesses, I want to read a notice of motion that I submitted, and when I'm finished, I'm going to ask for unanimous consent to deal with it today.

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and given recent charges by the United States Department of Justice against RT (the Russian state media broadcaster) in a scheme to funnel \$10M to a media organization in North America; and that Canadian companies and individuals have been found to be connected to this Russian propaganda effort,

The committee invite the following witnesses to testify for no less two hours on their participation in Russian-backed interference and far right disinformation campaigns intended to manipulate the Canadian public:

- a) Lauren Chen
- b) Liam Donovan
- c) Lauren Southern

The committee also invite concerned civil society representatives and disinformation experts to further examine the risks of this concerning activity:

- 1) Marcus Kolga, journalist
- 2) Aaron Shull, Managing Director at the Centre for International Governance Innovation
- 3) Wesley Wark, Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation
- 4) Stephanie Carvin, Professor at Carleton University
- 5) Thomas Juneau, Professor at University of Ottawa
- 6) Shelly Bruce, Former Chief of the Communications Security Establishment
- 7) Richard Fadden, Former Director of CSIS
- 8) Guillaume Sirois, Representative of the Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance
- 9) Mark Power, Representative of the Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance; and

Alexandra Chyczij, President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress

That the committee report its findings to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

Chair, this was submitted to the clerk, but it hasn't been 48 hours, so I wonder if I could have unanimous consent to deal with this now.

• (1735)

**The Chair:** Do we have unanimous consent to deal with this motion at this time?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Very well, go ahead.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to speak to the motion.

**The Chair:** I'm thinking that we have unanimous consent to move the motion. So moved.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I will move the motion then, Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay, go ahead.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** No, that's fine, Chair.

I'm sorry; I'm just checking my time.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I think this is going to take up the rest of our meeting. I wonder if we can release the witnesses at this point.

That's great.

Thank you to all the witnesses for joining us. I know it's a fun place to be in an afternoon, and we will invite you back, I'm pretty sure. Thank you, all.

We have 10 minutes available at this point.

I'm sorry, Ms. Damoff; I cut you off, I think.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Chair.

I know we don't have a lot of time left, but I want to speak to this.

Russia is known to use right-wing commentators in various countries, particularly in the West, to disseminate disinformation as a part of its broader influence operations. These commentators, often with large followings and credibility among the right-wing conservative audience, are used as conduits for spreading pro-Russian narratives or divisive content and applying issues like nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment, skepticism of main street media and distrust of democratic institutions.

Russia seeks to destabilize its adversaries from within and create chaos. This strategy involves seeding disinformation or half-truths that influencers repeat through social media and alt-news platforms. This tactic helps Russia achieve its geopolitical objectives by fostering division and polarization and undermining confidence in the democratic process.

I've had concerns about this issue for quite some time and was quite upset when I saw the charges that were laid by the United States on this.

It's something that I think all of us need to be looking at, and I'm hoping that we can vote to adopt this motion today.

I know we don't have a lot of time left, Chair, so I may finish there so that we can adopt the motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Lloyd.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** I'd like to pass my time on to Ms. Dancho.

**The Chair:** Ms. Dancho, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the motion, Ms. Damoff.

I do appreciate the witnesses. There are some excellent witnesses on here. They're well selected.

I would say that it's a bit unusual to include a limited list of witnesses. I would just appreciate if all parties had the opportunity. I know Mr. Lloyd mentioned Christian Leuprecht. We've had him here before.

I don't know if the Bloc or the NDP would also like to add witnesses, but it would be great to provide everyone an opportunity to ensure we have a robust list.

Otherwise, I see no problems, other than it doesn't mention how many meetings. Is that just open-ended, or...?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** It was intended to be open-ended.

**The Chair:** MP Albas.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Chair, thank you.

I'm not a member of the committee, but I find this very fascinating.

I would suggest that perhaps there would be some time given so that all parties can contribute witnesses, and then maybe you and the clerk could make contact to see who is actually interested in coming to speak to this upcoming study. Then perhaps the number of meetings would take shape and you could present it back to the committee.

• (1740)

**The Chair:** The motion has been moved as it is, so perhaps an amendment can be made.

We'll go to Ms. O'Connell and then Mr. MacGregor.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** He was on the speaking list.

I have a suggestion to offer, but he's right; he's on the speaking list.

Chair, can you add me?

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you, Chair.

I have no problems with the motion.

There are some people I'd like to add. Probably I'd seek a very slight amendment for the list. It would be "includes but is not limited to".

I would like to see people like Rachel Curran, who is head of public policy at Meta; Steve de Eyre, director of public policy and government affairs for TikTok Canada; and Lindsay Doyle, head of government affairs and policy at YouTube.

These are the platforms that a lot of these people have their content on. We know from previous studies at this committee that a lot of these social media giants are not even addressing their own terms of service, so I'd like to see those folks included.

I'm fine with having them listed here, or, to give everyone a chance to present their own witnesses, maybe we just include language that it "includes" this list "but is not limited to" it. I'm fine either way.

**The Chair:** Would you like to make that amendment?

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I will include the very slight amendment that, in advance of the list of 10 people there, it includes these people but is not limited to them.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Is there any discussion on Mr. MacGregor's amendment? There is none.

All in favour of Mr. MacGregor's amendment?

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We're back to the motion as amended, and we have Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I'm fine with that amendment now.

**The Chair:** Mr. Albas.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Again, I'm probably not the one who's going to do the study. Would it be that you, Mr. Chair, would then work with the clerk to get committee witnesses?

It would be helpful for all parties to know when they need to submit by, and then perhaps the clerk and you can inform the committee how many meetings you think it will take, once people have been contacted.

**The Chair:** That's generally the way we work anyway, but it's not part of the amendment and it's not part of the motion.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead please.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Since I'm stepping back into it, just as an aside, is the expectation that this happen immediately? When do we get our witnesses? That's Mr. Albas's point.

Are we interrupting any studies that may have been ongoing? I'm actually not sure. I've heard different things.

Are we doing this now, or are we finishing other things first?

**The Chair:** That's really up to the committee to decide.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Next week is kind of scheduled. The following week is kind of open, so I would suggest an amendment that the parties provide a witness list of additional witnesses by Wednesday of next week, so that we have a chance to schedule them for—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** That's not many days. It's four days.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** We could just have a subcommittee to determine timing.

The motion stands, and with that amendment it allows for additional witnesses. It's always done in relation to the parties, so that's kind of a given.

**The Chair:** Instead of dealing with the auto theft report on Tuesday, we could have a subcommittee meeting, I suppose.

Mr. Shipley, go ahead.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Chair, you mentioned earlier today that next week, I believe, you have Mr. Goodale coming for one hour, and in the second hour you have nothing scheduled. Maybe that's when that subcommittee could be held to finalize all these issues.

**The Chair:** I think that would work really well.

That's really not part of this whole motion. I think that makes sense, though. Let's try to work that in.

Ms. Michaud, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** I just want to know when the right time will be to discuss the order in which we'll do the studies. If the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure meets next Thursday after the committee has spent an hour with Mr. Goodale, that will be fine. I just want to make sure that we can finish what we already have on the table before we start this study.

If it's better to put it in the motion, I'm prepared to move it formally. However, if we all agree to finish our two reports before undertaking this study, I don't see the point of inserting that aspect into the motion.

I just want to make sure we're all in agreement.

• (1745)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I would just suggest on that point as well that we should just schedule a subcommittee so that the subcommittee can determine the best slot and what's realistic in terms of arranging witnesses.

We have 13 or so, with the additional witnesses. We could start planning but have a subcommittee to properly plan the previous studies that we want to complete, and our calendar. However, if this passes, the clerk would have direction to start, and then it's not limited, and then we can have a subcommittee next week.

**The Chair:** How about this? We vote on the motion as it currently stands, and then I will schedule a subcommittee meeting for the second hour next Thursday, and we'll move on from there.

Is that good?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Is there any further discussion on the motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I move to adjourn.  
(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I think that one was unanimous.  
Thank you, all.

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