



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 005

Thursday, October 2, 2025

Chair: Julie Dzerowicz



Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, October 2, 2025

• (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting number five of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, September 22, the committee is commencing its study of Bill C-3, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, 2025.

We have the Honourable Lena Diab, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and senior officials with us for the first hour to answer questions.

We have three witnesses on the second panel, one from the Bloc Québécois, one from the Conservatives and one from the Liberals, during our last hour.

The minister is very popular. You have all indicated that you have questions for her, and because we have only one hour, I will be very strict with time. I have brought aids with me today. I have two cards. Yellow means wrap up in 15 seconds; red means your time is up and your microphone will be turned off.

As always, kindly wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. I will remind everyone to kindly not speak over each other, as it will be hard for our translators to translate and makes their job very difficult. Thank you, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, for always reminding us of this.

Of course, please ensure that all your comments are addressed through the chair.

Members, I know you know this, but it's always good to reiterate: Please raise your hand if you wish to speak. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Now I would like to welcome our witnesses for the first panel of today's meeting.

We have the Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

We also have senior officials with us, including Catherine Scott, assistant deputy minister, settlement and citizens; Uyen Hoang, director general, citizenship branch; and Erika Schneiderei, counsel, legal services.

Welcome, senior officials.

Welcome, Minister Diab. I now invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes, after which we will proceed with a round of questions.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for your invitation.

[*English*]

As you know, we're here to answer questions for the first hour on Bill C-3, which faces a firm deadline. The court struck the first-generation limit as it existed as unconstitutional in December 2023. Since then, IRCC has been granted multiple extensions to allow Parliament to pass remedial legislation, and the deadline we're working with is November 20.

I want to stress that unless Parliament passes legislation, citizenship by descent will have no limit for many, and some lost Canadians will remain in limbo. To prevent that, we've put forward a responsible, controlled measure in Bill C-3.

[*Translation*]

The bill has two main objectives: It confers citizenship on those impacted by the first-generation limit, including the remaining lost Canadians, and it provides fair access to citizenship by descent going forward.

[*English*]

The Ontario Superior Court of Justice has said that our current hard cap, based on the first generation, is unconstitutional. With that in mind, this bill is a reasonable response.

Under Bill C-3, in future cases where a Canadian parent was born or adopted abroad, their child born or adopted abroad will be able to access citizenship as long as the parent has a substantial connection to Canada.

[*Translation*]

If the parent spent at least three years in Canada before the child's birth or adoption, their child will be a Canadian citizen or have access to the direct grant of citizenship for adoptions.

[English]

This approach was chosen because it is similar to the 1,095-day physical presence requirement for naturalization. It also avoids creating new lost Canadians. If we required those days to be consecutive or to be squeezed into a fixed window, we would shut out people who have already spent more than three years here, but over several periods, like children who move abroad with their parents every couple of years.

This is a technical discussion, and I have department officials with me to speak to specific details if those questions arise.

Key parts of the existing legislation have been found to be unconstitutional. It's our responsibility to define the boundaries of the right to citizenship conferred by Bill C-3 and to put clear parameters on how it is to be applied. We've heard concerns that Bill C-3 could mean hundreds of thousands of new citizens, which would put pressure on social services.

We know that between January 2024 and July 2025, we received just over 4,200 applications for discretionary grants of citizenship under the interim measure for those affected by the first-generation limit. Previous amendments in 2009 and 2015 saw about 20,000 people apply for proof of citizenship, with fewer than 2,400 applications in the busiest year.

Based on that evidence, we anticipate volumes in the tens of thousands over time. We do not expect any surge. Net fiscal impacts are expected to be limited. Some in this cohort are already here in Canada, contributing to general revenues, and those abroad are generally not eligible for most Canadian social programs.

Here, it's important to note that each program or service, whether it's federal or provincial, has its own eligibility criteria, which, in addition to citizenship, would include age, income level, legal status in Canada, tax filing, and residency in Canada or a specific province or territory for a specific period of time.

• (1535)

[Translation]

We've also heard suggestions that the bill should impose security checks on people who become recognized as Canadian under Bill C-3, a cohort that, I should note, is largely made up of low-risk children.

[English]

Citizenship by descent has never required security or criminality screening. Bill C-3 is consistent with the 2009 and 2015 amendments.

Bill C-3 reflects both the value of Canadian citizenship and the reality of how Canadian families live today.

I welcome the committee's questions.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Diab, for your remarks.

We will now begin with the first round of questions. We'll start with Ms. Rempel Garner for six minutes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Minister, we have a chain migration bill in front of us today at a time when your department has been issuing record numbers of all sorts of temporary foreign visas. We have a housing, jobs and health care crisis.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has estimated that at least 115,000 people would become Canadian citizens under this chain migration bill.

Where are they going to live?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you very much for the question.

This is what we know on volumes. From January 2024 to July 2025, when the interim measures were implemented by the department, the department received over 4,200 applications from those individuals—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you.

There are a lot of people you are allowing in with this chain migration bill—

Peter Fragiskatos (London Centre, Lib.): Chair, I have a point of order.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: No, this is my time.

Where are they going to live?

The Chair: There's a point of order.

I will stop the clock, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Peter Fragiskatos: It is a point of order, chair, because we didn't hear the full answer. The member had the chance to complete her question. We need to hear the answer from the minister in order to have—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: On that point of order, it is my time.

The Chair: It is your time, Ms. Rempel Garner, but please allow the witness to complete her sentences.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I gave her equal time, which you should have been looking at.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: We don't have an agreement on equal time, so please allow the witness—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Are you silencing me?

The Chair: I am not. I'm going to ask you to continue, but kindly let her answer the questions.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I would advise not trying to silence me.

Where are they going to live, Minister? Where are all the people you're letting in on this chain migration bill going to live?

The CMHC says that housing starts are down by 16%, so where are you putting 115,000 auto-Liberal Canadians?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to remind the members that this bill was struck down in December 2023. We are here to remedy a situation, and if we do not act, we are in jeopardy—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you.

On that point, why didn't you appeal the court ruling? You just let it go.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Again, Madam Chair, we're here today to talk about this bill that is in front of us. It is important legislation that strikes a balance to protect Canadian values and Canadian families.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: You just said the bill is here because of a court ruling. The court didn't write this legislation. I'll ask you this again. Where are these people you are putting in this bill—which the courts didn't write and whose ruling you didn't appeal—going to live?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: The IRCC saw no surge in the interim measures, nor did it see any surge happening in 2009 and 2015 when similar legislation was in place. I remind the member that a lot of these individuals are infants, and there are a lot of individuals who are already in Canada and paying taxes as well.

● (1540)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Just like the IRCC didn't see the surge of 1.5 million people when we didn't have places for them to live.

Who's going to be their family doctor in this chain migration bill? How and where are these people going to get family doctors?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: I remind members again that I need to pass it to protect the value of citizenship in this country. Without it, there will be no limit on citizenship by descent for many people born to Canadian citizens abroad.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: To be clear, that's because your government didn't appeal the court ruling. It didn't use any other tools in its tool kit. It just said, "Yay, chain migration. Here is a chain migration bill."

I'll give you one more shot. How long are Canadian families going to have to wait in ER rooms because of this chain migration bill?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Chair, Bill C-3 is reasonable legislation that finds a limit for the first-generation limit. We are required by the Constitution to have proper legislation in front of us, and that is why we're here today.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Yes, but you chose not to appeal a court ruling and to then table a chain migration bill. That is your government's decision.

You can't answer where these people are going to live. You can't answer how they're going to get a family doctor, when many Canadians don't have a family doctor. Where are they going to work during the youth jobs crisis? Are they going to sit on EI benefits while you continue to issue TFW permits for Tim Hortons?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Again, as I said in my remarks, there are rules in place in every jurisdiction in this country, whether it's provincial or federal, about who's entitled to receive what. There are age requirements, requirements for paying taxes and so on. That is not something whereby, as the member suggests, there will be no jobs happening.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: You have tabled a chain migration bill. There are at least 115,000 people, per the Parliamentary Budget Officer—

Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'm not sure what chain migration bill she's talking about. I thought we were studying Bill C-3, which is actually about—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: This is debate, Chair, and it's a Liberal attempt to silence me.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Mr. Zuberi, but thank you.

Sameer Zuberi: I'm just not sure what she's talking about.

The Chair: We will restart the time.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Chair, these Liberals really want to silence me because of their chain migration bill.

The minister can't answer where these people are going to live, she can't answer where they're going to get a job and she can't answer how they're going to get a family doctor.

I'm going to ask again why you didn't appeal the court ruling. I think it's because the Liberals like out-of-control immigration levels.

The other thing is that there are no language requirements in this bill. Do you not respect the right of Canadians to know at least one of Canada's official languages?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: As I said, this bill has limits on automatic citizenship by descent. Without passing any legislation, there will be no limits, and I don't believe that is what the members are looking for.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: There's no limit under this chain migration bill. You are correct. There are no language requirements and no security requirements—nothing.

The minister can't tell us, but I'm going to ask one more time. Where are people going to live under this chain migration bill? Who is going to be their family doctor? Where are they going to work in a youth job crisis?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: I want to remind members that a lot of the people who will be caught under this legislation will be minors—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: We have a youth job crisis.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: There will also be individuals who are already in Canada and are already contributing to our system.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Where are they going to live? There are 115,000 people at least.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: The ones who are in Canada already would have places where they are living.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: What about the rest of them? Where are they going to live?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner. That is your six minutes.

We'll now go to Mr. Fragiskatos for six minutes.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister and officials, for being here.

We just heard the phrase “chain migration” repeated here at the committee, despite the fact that this is a clear effort on the part of the government to reform the Citizenship Act. There's a distinction that needs to be made there, I'm afraid.

Minister, in your comments, which you weren't able to get entirely on the record, I think one important rebuttal to this particular argument about chain migration does relate to numbers. You gave a number of 4,000-plus in terms of what the government has seen up to this point from those who would be affected by this legislation.

Can you repeat that fact for us?

• (1545)

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Certainly. This is what we know about volumes, for the members of the committee and everyone who is listening.

As we know, the bill was struck down in December 2023. Under the interim measures in effect between January 2024 and the end of July 2025, IRCC received just over 4,200 applications from individuals impacted by the first-generation limit who were eligible to be offered consideration for a discretionary grant of citizenship. That includes those born after 2009, when the first-generation limit came into effect—clearly those are children and infants—as well as the descendants of lost Canadians—in other words, the children of lost Canadians who were remedied in 2009 and in 2015, and another section of lost Canadians.

There has been no surge of applications under the interim measures. Similarly, when the legislative changes were implemented back in 2009, under a Conservative government, and in 2015—10 years ago—under a Liberal government, which restored citizenship to most lost Canadians, we didn't see a surge of applications. Overall, since 2009, there have been a little over 20,000 individuals who

came forward to seek proof of citizenship. At the highest point, the department received fewer than 2,400 applications per year. In fact, what we know based on experience with previous legislation that addressed lost Canadians as well as from those impacted by the first-generation limit who have come forward since January 2024, is that we expect of tens of thousands, not hundreds of thousands, to be impacted by Bill C-3. Many people may not even apply; they may not even come forward.

IRCC is prepared to process those applications with proof of citizenship. This is the right thing to do. It's something that needs to be remedied. It was found to be unconstitutional. That's why we're here today, to remedy that.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

I'm going to turn to the officials now, if I could.

Again, this question relates to rebutting this point about chain migration and Bill C-3 and is for whoever wishes to take it.

Can you talk to us about the fact that the bill embraces a cumulative approach of 1,095 days as opposed to a consecutive approach? Touch on that. The 1,095 days is, as we know, three years. How does that compare to permanent residency requirements? Is that consecutive or cumulative days with respect to permanent residency?

I'm interested in seeing if Bill C-3 aligns with requirements for permanent residency in Canadian law.

Catherine Scott (Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Citizens, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you.

The substantial connection test in the legislation is demonstrated by presence in Canada for 1,095 cumulative days, as you pointed out. This is similar to the physical presence requirement that any applicants for citizenship by naturalization have to demonstrate. Bill C-3 uses cumulative presence rather than consecutive, because it recognizes that people demonstrate their connection to Canada in different ways and reflects the ways that Canadian families live today. It would allow a family to demonstrate their connection to Canada, for example, if an individual did their university studies in Canada or came over for many summers to spend time with their grandparents. It gives that flexibility as well to families working for a multinational corporation who are transferred multiple times. It gives that flexibility to meet that 1,095-day requirement and demonstrate that connection to Canada.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

I think I have just about a minute left, Chair.

I think it's important to put the matter into context as well. I wanted to ask those substantive questions on specifics of the bill and deal with this argument, again, of chain migration, which I think you've done.

The ruling from the Ontario Superior Court of Justice is very clear as it relates to the charter. What were the specific charter concerns raised by the court?

That's for the officials.

• (1550)

Erika Schneider (Counsel, Legal Services, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): I'll just say quickly that the court's findings were based on section 6 of the charter, which is the mobility rights under the charter, as well as section 15, which is the equality rights.

I don't think I have time to go into more than that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for six minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, welcome to the committee and thank you for being with us.

My colleague Mr. Fragiskatos, whom I greet, asked the officials to compare the 1,095 days of presence under Bill C-3 with the 1,095-day residency requirement for a permanent resident to be able to be naturalized.

Do you see a difference between the two? Is there one?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: No, it's the same comparison. If you want, the officials can—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: In the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, I thought that, to become a naturalized Canadian, a permanent resident had to have 1,095 non-consecutive days—

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: It's 1,095 days.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: —over a five-year period.

So there's a difference, Minister.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Yes, that's true. It's 1,095 days over—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: —over a five-year period.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: —over five years.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Does Bill C-3 specify that it's a five-year period?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: No. In that case, it's 1,095 days.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: In 30 seconds, you gave me two different answers to a fairly simple question. Thank you, Minister.

So the 1,095 days for permanent residents to become citizens is being kept, but the five-year period is being removed. Is that right?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Yes, that's right.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay.

The Canadian Citizens Rights Council submitted a brief when Bill S-245 was being studied here in committee. According to that

brief, it would still be difficult to verify a 1,095-day presence in the country.

I would like to know what documentation the department will request to ensure that those 1,095 days were indeed spent on Canadian soil.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: That's a good question.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you. I only ask good questions.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Let me turn to the officials for an answer.

Catherine Scott: We are already in the process of implementing this practice thanks to the interim measures put in place by the department. We could require a certain number of documents, such as proof of enrolment in a university, a tax return, documents such as a Hydro-Québec bill covering a certain period, a passport. A number of elements would be considered in this analysis.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

Minister, does Canada collect data on individuals leaving the country?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: No, I don't think so, but we are working on that aspect.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: My question is simple. If someone has an electricity bill—

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Just a moment, please. My colleague wants to tell me something.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: I'm told that Canada collects that data.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: So Canada collects data on individuals exiting the country. That's news to me. When someone leaves Canada, the Canadian government is informed. Is that correct?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: My colleague will answer your question.

[*English*]

Uyen Hoang (Director General, Citizenship Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): We have a program called entry-exit. It is outside my remit, so I don't want to go into details in terms of how it is implemented, but there are mechanisms in place in order to know when an individual is leaving a country.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay. I thought Canada didn't collect exit data on individuals. If I understand correctly, when I go to the United States, for example, the government is informed that I went to the United States based on when I left the country, not when I returned home. You have the date on which the person exited.

Okay. That's perfect. We'll look into that.

I want to get clarification on some of the numbers that are being presented. The Bloc Québécois has always been positive about the idea of passing legislation for “lost Canadians”, as you know. However, that still requires clarification. According to some, four million people are part of the Canadian diaspora abroad. Others say that one million people would be affected by Bill C-3. The Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us it's 115,000 to 150,000 people.

What are the department's exact numbers? If we're going to put in place legislation that grants people Canadian citizenship, that's pretty important. A number is needed. I imagine that the department's resources can give us the number of people who will be covered by this legislation.

• (1555)

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you for your question.

What we know—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm sorry to interrupt, Minister, but I just want to get a number. You must know what it is. I'm talking about the number of people affected.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Okay. It's impossible to know the exact number, but—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's perfect.

That's fine with me. So it's impossible to put a figure on it.

Minister, you told us that people in the country were already benefiting from Bill C-3, which is quite commendable. That won't affect the housing crisis at all, for example, as they're already in the country.

However, if they are already in the country, I imagine you have figures. Do you know how many people already in the country will be affected by the bill and will be able to benefit from it?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: We have a bill that will have to be passed—

The Chair: You have 15 seconds left.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: There is a limit imposed by the courts—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Normally, when a bill is passed, we make sure we know how many people are affected—

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: We think we've put reasonable limits in this bill. Individuals must demonstrate a substantial connection to Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[English]

Thank you, Minister Diab.

That completes our first round.

Now we begin our second round with Mr. Redekopp for five minutes.

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

Minister, in May 2022, you said, “Fostering bilingualism is a personal priority for me.... I think we can make inroads on this problem by working hard to increase francophone immigration”.

Obviously, language is important to you. It's important to me also. That's why I'm concerned that there is no language requirement for the new citizens who will be created by Bill C-3.

Can you assure Canadians that people getting citizenship through this pathway will be able to speak either French or English?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Of course language is very important to me. What is also very important is having both of Canada's official languages here, obviously in Parliament, and across the country.

This is citizenship by right. It is a right that we are restoring to people. Again, a number of those people will be infants and children. My hope is that they would be speaking both of Canada's official languages and, perhaps, a third or fourth language as well.

Brad Redekopp: I would just point out that the courts are not the ones that are making this bill. This is your bill. You're creating this bill. You are the one who is creating the mechanisms by which people become Canadians. You have the option to put language into this bill.

You're right, if children are doing it, then that's fine; they don't have to do it. What about older people who come? That's what concerns me about this. There is no thought in this to getting language in here.

The other thing that I'm concerned about is that there's no requirement to take a citizenship test. Are you confident that these new Canadians you're proposing to create will understand Canadian values? How is that fair, if they aren't?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Canadian values are exactly why this bill is in front of us. It's to protect those Canadian values. It's to ensure that people who want to be Canadians because they value being a Canadian are allowed to be Canadian. It's to give back and to restore that right to many who have lost it. There is also the substantial connection test that is extremely important. We are here to right a wrong. That is exactly why we're here today.

Brad Redekopp: Minister, what are the Canadian values?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: What are the Canadian values? Obviously, one of them is protecting our official languages in this country. It is helping each other. Our Canadian values are human values.

Brad Redekopp: If it's protecting Canadian languages, then why is that not in the bill? I'm surprised by that.

I'm also concerned about another thing. There is no security check of any kind in this pathway. We know that in every pathway to citizenship, a certain percentage of people fail our security checks, and then they are denied citizenship because of that. Your transition binder specifically talked about increasing scrutiny resulting in higher refusal rates. Some of these people will, for sure, have security problems and even criminal records. Admitting safe and secure people is paramount to Canadians. Are you okay that this law will grant citizenship to people with criminal records?

• (1600)

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: This law will give citizenship to people who have lost it or to people who should have had it anyway. It's the same bill that was introduced in 2009 and 2015 as well, with regard to that.

Brad Redekopp: To be clear though, you're saying that it's okay—

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Many of them are children.

Brad Redekopp: —to introduce allowing people to have citizenship if they have criminal records, and we're not going to check that.

Sameer Zuberi: On a point of order, this bill deals with people who are not yet born. How can an unborn person have a criminal record?

The Chair: That's not a point of order. I'm sorry.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: On a point of order, this Liberal keeps interrupting us and trying to silence us. He knows better. I was told he's been an MP for 10 years or something. He knows better than to interject with debate on inanities during my colleague's time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Redekopp, we'll restart the time. Thank you.

Brad Redekopp: If we have children, that's fine. They should easily pass the security test. What about those who are older? Are you saying that people who have violent criminal pasts or terrorism-related backgrounds are just going to be given citizenship through this pathway?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Again, I want to go back to the reason for this legislation. It was struck down as unconstitutional. The limits in it went against the charter.

We are here, and we are putting limits on Canadian citizenship. We are trying to create a balance. People have to establish a substantial connection to Canada with the number of days and have proof of that. Again, we are here to right a wrong, and it is a right for a lot of people to have citizenship.

Brad Redekopp: Minister, the courts did not tell you how to do this. They said you needed to do something, but the method you're using is of your own choosing. You are choosing to not put security in here.

You also seem pretty confident that there are a lot of children in this. Does that mean you have numbers to prove how many of these will be children versus adults?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: If you do the math, as the department has done, based on the years we are using, a lot of them would have been born after 2009.

Brad Redekopp: I have one last quick question. Can you assure Canadians that no terrorists will become citizens through this legislation?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Again, these are people who are already citizens. Had it not been for—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: What are you talking about?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: They have the right to be citizens.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

We will now go to our next questioner, Mr. Sameer Zuberi, for five minutes.

Sameer Zuberi: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

I want to ask about a hypothetical situation. I don't know if it is encompassed in this act. I want to give a scenario that everybody can understand.

Let's say somebody chooses to have their career outside of Canada. They have a family, and their child is born outside the country. Later on, this child has their own family and comes to Canada to live here. If they come to Canada with a minor child—let's say they're four years old—they cannot pass on their citizenship. They can pass it on only to children born in Canada in the future.

What happens to the four-year-old, and how do they become a citizen?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you for that question, Mr. Zuberi. I'm going to have the official answer that specific scenario for you.

Uyen Hoang: There are two parts to the bill. One is if the child has already been born versus in the future, if the child has yet to be born.

If the child has already been born to a Canadian parent beyond the first generation, they would automatically become a citizen by operation of law. However, in the future, on or after the bill's coming into force—so we're talking about a child who is yet to be born—as long as the Canadian parent can demonstrate a connection of 1,095 days, they can pass on their citizenship to the child beyond the first generation.

Sameer Zuberi: How did you come to the number of 1,095? What's the rationale for that?

Catherine Scott: The 1,095 days, as we mentioned, are reflective of the requirements that are also set for naturalized Canadians, who also have to meet 1,095 days to obtain citizenship.

• (1605)

Sameer Zuberi: On the issue of lost Canadians, do you see that this bill will remedy in whole the concern of lost Canadians and respond to the court's requirement?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Yes, that is why the bill is drafted. It has a number of objectives, one of which would be to remedy citizenship status for those who are affected by the 2009 law. Then it would establish a revised framework for citizenship of descent going forward, as you were just explaining. Obviously, there's a comparable treatment for adopted children as well.

Lastly, it does clarify some citizenship legislation. Maybe not everybody wants to be a Canadian, so it also gives the process where-by you can renounce. There's a renunciation process. It also clarifies for everyone exactly what the rules are if you wish to pursue those.

Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

How will you determine that the 1,095 days have elapsed or been satisfied?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: I'll try to do the best I can here. I think Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe asked the same question.

Officials will take a look at whether the person has lived in Canada, if there are mortgages—well, mortgages won't do it—or leases, documentation, entry-exit out of Canada, or if they spent the summer in cottages. In Nova Scotia, we have lots of cottages. People come in the summertime quite a bit and bring their children. There are many facets one can look at. Of course, I hope we would have officials taking a look at that.

I would suspect it might be kind of similar to when you look at the 1,095 days before you get your citizenship, if you're already in Canada after you've been a permanent resident. There might be some similarities there as well, but there would be a lot of differences, given that some people may be abroad as well.

The Chair: Thank you. That ends that round.

Thank you very much, Mr. Zuberi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to quickly come back to the program that tracks exits, which you told me about. If I understand correctly, it was put in place around 2019-20. That's what I found on the Internet.

[*English*]

Uyen Hoang: It's not a program that I'm responsible for, so it would be inappropriate for me to speak to the details of it.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay. I'm told it's since 2019. I take it that prior to 2019, Canada wasn't tracking exits. Consequently, in your efforts, Minister, you should take into account the fact that for the period before 2019, it will be difficult to show that the people affected by Bill C-3 actually spent 1,095 days on Canadian soil, since exits weren't tracked before this program was put in place. I suggest you take an interest in it.

Countries like Denmark, Portugal, Spain and Sweden have included language requirements for citizenship by descent in their respective legislation. You know how important language is in Que-

bec. Do you think these countries are on the wrong track when they require proficiency in their official language in order to become citizens by descent?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you very much for the question.

Language is very important, I completely agree. Here, Canadians who were born as citizens by descent are treated the same as those who were born here. For that reason, the comparison is the same. We did a jurisdictional analysis with many countries.

If you want, I can turn it over to the officials, because we did that as well.

• (1610)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: No, no, I don't need to talk to them, so I'm fine with your answer, Minister.

There have been a lot of—

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm from the Bloc Québécois, so we have less time for questions.

Thank you, Minister. I would run out of time anyway.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*English*]

We now have Ms. Rempel Garner for five minutes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Minister, how many people exited Canada last year?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, we are here today to talk about Bill C-3. It's a bill that many Canadians and many families have been waiting for for many years.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: The reason I ask this is to pick up on the last stream.

How are you going to prove a claim that's made under this chain migration bill if it's prior to 2019 and you can't track entry and exit data?

Don't you think there's a pretty big potential for fraud there?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, the current legislation that was struck down was found to be unacceptable. There are a lot of consequences for Canadian families who are living—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Yes, I get your word salad.

Let's say somebody makes a claim that their five years happened before 2019, and you're not tracking exit and entry data. Could anybody just say, "Yeah, I went to the cottage, yo. Please give me citizenship," like it's a Costco card?

Can you tell me how fraud wouldn't happen here?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Like-minded countries, the M5s, all have policies that limit the passing of automatic citizenship by descent.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I'm talking about us, here in Canada.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: We believe we've struck a balance here—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: What's the balance?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: —by requiring a substantial connection to the country.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: What's the balance?

If somebody came in prior to 2019 and you can't prove if they entered or exited, literally anybody could be like, "Yeah, I'm Canadian, yo. Give me citizenship. This is not sus at all."

Do you understand what you're saying here? You've introduced a chain migration bill, and you can't prove if somebody entered the country. Do you realize how ridiculous that is?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Chair, again, I think the question is a bit ridiculous, to be quite frank.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you. I will be clipping that.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: People need to demonstrate that they have the substantial connection—

Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.): On a point of order, an opportunity should be provided to the witnesses to answer the questions. This is not the decorum we should have in this committee. There needs to be a question, and there needs to be an answer.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zahid.

We'll allow the witness to answer the question. We will restart the time.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: On that point of order, I would love an answer. It would be awesome. I agree with my colleague. I'm not getting an answer from the minister.

Thank you for raising this point of order.

I'm asking, Madam Chair, how she's going to prevent fraud related to this. You started my time, but I'm making a point of order. I want your ruling on this. I didn't get an answer.

The Chair: Yes, you're asking a question.

I'm going to restart your clock, and then we will have the minister respond.

Minister Diab—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you. Can I restate the question? My colleagues were trying to silence me.

For people who are listening, the Liberals have tabled a chain migration bill, and in order to fulfill the requirements of this chain migration bill, which will give them Canadian citizenship, applicants have to say they were in Canada for three years, but prior to 2019—or we don't even know today—the Liberals can't prove if they were in Canada.

Minister, how are you going to prove rampant fraud and the abuse of Canadian citizenship?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you for that.

We already do this for all naturalized Canadians. Applicants will be asked to submit evidence of their Canadian parents' physical presence. This is something that's been done in this country and in all countries with proof on the citizenship application.

It would include things like—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Again—

The Chair: Hold on. I'll stop the clock, Minister.

Ms. Rempel Garner, please allow the witness to finish.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Chair, on a point of order, I do not have to let the Liberals word-salad my answer when I'm asking about the value of Canadian citizenship.

I'm sorry, you can't do that.

The Chair: Here is the problem, Ms. Rempel Garner: There is crosstalk, and it is very hard for the interpreters to interpret. It's very difficult for them to do their jobs.

Kindly allow.... We'll have one person at a time.

Minister—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: No, it's me. I get to ask the question again, since you interrupted me again.

The Chair: I will then allow the witness to answer the question.

Thank you.

Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, CPC): On a point of order, if the witnesses answered direct questions, then we wouldn't get into these kinds of situations. If we allow the witnesses to continue off—

• (1615)

The Chair: This is debate, Mr. Ma, not a point of order.

Ms. Rempel Garner, please go ahead.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you.

Chair, since we're not going to get an answer...obviously, the Liberals have written a chain migration bill that's going to allow for rampant fraud. The minister doesn't include a requirement for taking a citizenship test in this chain migration bill. She said that this bill is the right thing to do.

Is it right to grant Canadian citizenship to somebody without having them take a citizenship test?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Chair, as I was saying, officers will assess the totality of the information that's presented when an application is in front of them and determine whether or not they're satisfied and whether or not the individual should be given—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: But there's no citizenship test. Are you saying it's the right thing to do to give Canadian citizenship to somebody who can't speak one of Canada's official languages and who doesn't have to take a citizenship test—and with no security screening? Is that what you are telling this committee we are supposed to vote for with this chain migration bill?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Chair, this bill was drafted to have reasonable limits that would surpass the constitutional rights of people. It strikes a balance by protecting the value of Canadian citizenship. It's fairness to Canadian families—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Wouldn't you argue that not—

The Chair: Ms. Rempel Garner, please allow the witness to answer the question.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: She is word-salading.

The Chair: Please let her finish answering the question.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Listen. Listen. Okay.

Minister, yes or no, do you think it's right to give Canadian citizenship to somebody without that person having to take a citizenship test?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: This bill is here to protect Canadian values, and I believe we've struck a balance. If you have any amendments, the committee is happy to look at those.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: You'd support an amendment to make somebody take a citizenship test, then.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: I said that if there are amendments, that's why the committee is here.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: No, I'm asking you now. Is that a yes?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: What I'm saying is that this bill protects—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: That's a no.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: —the value of citizenship, and it is something that is very important to all Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Is it a “yes but no”?

The Chair: Ms. Rempel Garner, would you please allow her to answer?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Would you accept an amendment to make people take a citizenship test via this bill, yes or no?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: It's not up to me to accept or reject. These are the committee's findings. I was on a committee in the last Parliament.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Why didn't you draft it with a citizenship test?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Again, we've done a jurisdictional scan, and officials are happy to give you what many other countries around the globe have in reference to this.

The Chair: That's five minutes.

Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

We'll go to our next questioner, Ms. Amandeep Sodhi, for five minutes.

Amandeep Sodhi (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Thank you to the witnesses.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

My question is for you, Minister. Can you please elaborate on how Bill C-3 specifically addresses Canadian citizenship issues rather than immigration policy?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: What we have here is that the current first-generation limit to citizenship no longer reflects how Canadian families live today and the values that define our country, so the government introduced Bill C-3 to extend citizenship by descent in a way that balances fair access and protects the value of Canadian citizenship.

We believe we have struck a balance in this bill and have put reasonable limits on citizenship. Going forward, Bill C-3 would allow the child of a Canadian parent born or adopted abroad with substantial connection to Canada to acquire citizenship if the child is born abroad, and the child would also have access to the direct grant of citizenship if the child is adopted abroad.

The bill addresses, again, the standing issue of the term we've heard, the “lost Canadians”, who are those who have lost or never acquired citizenship under former citizenship laws. It would restore citizenship to the remaining lost Canadians and provide access to citizenship for their descendants.

If you would like a bit more, that's why officials are with me today for the first hour.

Amandeep Sodhi: Okay, that's perfect.

Once again, to reiterate the urgency of passing this legislation, could either one of you please let the committee know what the consequences are for Canadians if Bill C-3 is not passed before the deadline?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: The reason we are here is that we are under a limit. As I said, on December 19, 2023, the court declared that parts of the bill were unconstitutional.

As a result, the department had special measures from January 2024 forward, with the expectation of a certain bill that would be implemented. We are here today with the legislation. We believe we've put a substantial connection test in there of 1,095 days to provide clarity to people and families and to protect the value of Canadian citizenship, ensuring that those who have been waiting for years have the citizenship they are looking and waiting for.

• (1620)

Amandeep Sodhi: Minister, why do you think it's important to limit citizenship by descent?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Again, that's why we have a limit of 1,095. We believe that it's important for people to show there is a connection to Canada. Again, officers will assess that connection, as they've been doing every day. In every single file, that happens. We believe it's a reasonable limit, but it's also there to protect the value of our Canadian citizenship.

Amandeep Sodhi: How does Bill C-3 impact who is recognized as a Canadian citizen as opposed to who is allowed to immigrate to Canada?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: With immigration to Canada, obviously people apply to immigrate to Canada. There are many pathways, such as federal programs, provincial programs and territorial programs. It's very different. This gives the right of citizenship to people who have lost it and who should have had it, and it deals with it on a go-forward basis.

Officials, if you'd like to add anything on that to clarify anything else, please let me know.

Amandeep Sodhi: I think I'm good, Madam Chair. There won't be enough time for another answer.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Sodhi.

Colleagues, we have just over seven minutes left in this first hour. Can I suggest maybe two and a half minutes for each of the parties? Is that okay, two and a half minutes for Mr. Menegakis, two and a half minutes for Ms. Zahid and then two and a half minutes for Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe? Yes, that's perfect.

Oh, it's Mr. Redekopp.

We'll do two and a half minutes for Mr. Redekopp, please.

Brad Redekopp: Thank you, Chair.

I know that the courts told you that you had to change this law, but they didn't tell you how to change it. The "how" part is up to you, Minister, and the government.

My question for you is this: Is it reasonable—is it the right thing to do—to not include a requirement for people to have one of our two official languages? Is that the right thing to do, in your opinion, in this bill? I'm speaking specifically about people who are going to be over the age of 18 who would be affected by this bill.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: As I said, the purpose of the bill is to return citizenship to people who have lost it and should have had it already.

Brad Redekopp: Madam Chair, I'm just looking for a yes or no answer.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Canadians who are born citizens by descent are not required to demonstrate official language capacity.

Brad Redekopp: You believe that's reasonable.

Do you think the same thing is true about those same people over the age of 18 getting citizenship without a citizenship test? Give a yes or no, please.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Citizens who are eligible do not right now get a citizenship test. I wish they did. We should have civics classes.

Brad Redekopp: Are you saying that people who are applying for citizenship do not have to do a citizenship test? Is that what you just said?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: No, I'm saying Canadians do not need to have—

Brad Redekopp: I'm talking about people applying for citizenship through this pathway who are over the age of 18. Do you think it's reasonable that they should not have to do a citizenship test?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Again, the answer, to be clear, is that Canadians who are born citizens by descent are not required to take one.

Brad Redekopp: I'm not sure you fully understand this, but the law that we are debating here, that we're talking about, is going to do... We have the option to create it however we want. We could choose to create it to say that these people have to have tests. You're saying that you don't want that, that it's not something that's important to you as a minister, as a government.

It's the same with the security checks. You're saying that it's not important, if you have a person trying to obtain citizenship through this process who's over 18, that they have a security check.

• (1625)

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: The bill is drafted to take into consideration the charter and the Constitution, but it's also consistent with the 2009 law as well.

Brad Redekopp: This is reasonable, then. Not having security checks and allowing terrorists into the country through this is potentially okay with you.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: That's exactly what I didn't say.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

We'll now go to Ms. Salma Zahid for two and a half minutes.

Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the minister and all the officials for appearing before this committee on this important legislation about lost Canadians.

Minister, today we have heard a lot about language tests, citizenship tests and the Canadian values test. Could you please explain the difference between birthright citizenship and citizenship by naturalization, and how birthright citizenship is a right and not a gift?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: You are right; it is a right. That is exactly why we're here today. It's to make right what had been wrong and to grant citizenship to people who have the right to have it.

Just for more clarity, why I don't get one of the officials to also comment on that?

Uyen Hoang: Bill C-3 does not include any requirements, as you have pointed out, for individuals who become citizens by descent to pass security or criminality screenings, or to pass a language or knowledge test.

What we're talking about is Canadians who were born Canadian citizens. They are considered to be citizens by descent. Citizens by descent currently do not have to undergo any of these tests.

Furthermore, most of those who were excluded from citizenship because of the first-generation limit are those born after 2009, when it came into force. This means you're looking at a cohort that is largely minors—16 and under—if this bill comes into force this year. They are generally deemed lower risk for security and criminality purposes.

Citizens born after the bill comes into force are essentially newborns or very young children when their parents apply for their proof of citizenship. These babies or young children do not pose a security risk in becoming citizens.

Similarly, Canadians who are born citizens by descent are not required to demonstrate their official capacity for knowledge of Canada. On principle, this cohort of citizens by descent should not be subject to such requirements as well. This is consistent with the changes we made in 2009 and 2015.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Hoang. Thank you so much, Ms. Zahid.

[Translation]

Next up is Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

You have two and a half minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, every department is experiencing budget cuts. In fact, your Prime Minister has asked all ministers to reduce spending in their departments. However, here we have a bill that would add between 150,000 and one million applications to be processed. That's not counting the 1,095 days of residence we talked about earlier, which also needs to be verified. It seems to me to be a rather tedious task, ultimately, with what we've learned today.

Do you have the resources? You're already behind the processing times in all the other programs, but now one is going to be added. It's fine if you have the necessary resources, but I think more resources are needed.

Have you calculated the administrative costs of implementing Bill C-3, as well as the number of additional people it will take?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: I thank the member for his excellent question.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I always have good questions.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: IRCC is ready to process proof of citizenship applications with our existing resources within our dedicated citizenship team.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: So there are no plans to add any resources to IRCC, even if Bill C-3 is passed?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: With respect to this bill, the department has said no.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Resources aren't being added, but there may be a million more applications to process, not to mention the 1,095 days of residence to be verified. You're telling us that you don't need additional resources, when you're behind in all the other IRCC programs.

Did I understand correctly?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Yes, but I'll let Ms. Scott confirm that.

• (1630)

Catherine Scott: We've received 4,200 applications in the last 19 months. Looking ahead, the department believes it has the resources within its dedicated citizenship team to process the number of applications it expects to receive.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: How can you be sure that you will have the capacity to process applications if you're unable to tell me how many people will be affected by Bill C-3?

[English]

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: Based on the records they have received—

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: They say it could affect a million people.

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab: No, it's not a million people.

[English]

It's tens of thousands, not a million.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: No? So there's been a change of opinion on the number of one million people—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Minister and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[English]

One hour goes by very, very quickly.

Thank you, Minister and officials, for your time. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for answering all the questions.

We will suspend for five to 10 minutes so that our current witnesses can leave and we can get the second panel set up.

Thank you.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone.

We are now in the second hour of our meeting today.

We have a panel of three witnesses.

As a reminder to our witnesses, kindly wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

In terms of our witnesses for the second panel, we have, as an individual, Michael Bonner, senior fellow, Aristotle Foundation for Public Policy. We have Mr. Don Chapman, who has written a book on lost Canadians. From the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, we have three guests: Mr. Jacques, interim Parliamentary Budget Officer; Mr. Elmarzougui, senior analyst; and Louis Perreault, director, economic analysis.

Welcome to you all.

Up to five minutes will be given for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

Mr. Bonner, we have you up first for five minutes.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Michael Bonner (Senior Fellow, Aristotle Foundation for Public Policy, As an Individual): Honourable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

[English]

Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

It is an honour to be here before you today to discuss our national policy on citizenship.

[Translation]

I very much appreciate your time and your commitment to shaping immigration policy in Canada, and I look forward to contributing to this important discussion.

[English]

I am a former immigration policy adviser, a government relations professional, a historian and a senior fellow at the Aristotle Foundation for Public Policy.

Earlier this year, the Aristotle Foundation published a study of mine on Canadian immigration policy. It is called “Repairing the fray: Improving immigration and citizenship policy in Canada”. The purpose of that study was twofold. It explains why a long-standing consensus in favour of immigration has broken down over the past 10 years and offers some recommendations for improving immigration and citizenship policy and thereby restoring confidence in our immigration system.

One of my main criticisms of recent policy was that Canadian citizenship was not valued highly enough. I made the following comment: “We have the right and the obligation to raise the value of Canadian citizenship, and to demand more of our citizens. Above all...efforts at integration should proceed not from a dislike of other places, but from a love for Canada.”

[Translation]

Canadians take pride in who we are. Over four centuries, settlers and immigrants have contributed to the richness of our country based on a proud history and a distinctive identity. Canada is a constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary democracy, a federal state. We are the only constitutional monarchy in North America. We inherited the oldest continuous constitutional tradition in the world. Canadians are united by a shared commitment to the rule of law and the institutions of parliamentary government.

[English]

We have much to be proud of, and we have welcomed many generations of newcomers eager to assist in the building of our great country. It was, accordingly, a shameful error to describe Canada as a “postnational state” having “no mainstream” and lacking a “core identity”. It was strange to hear this from a Prime Minister, and even stranger, as it seemed to me, to refashion citizenship policy to reflect this supposed void in the heart of our country.

The theory that we are a non-nation without cultural norms is absurd, and Canadians rightly rejected it. An easily foreseeable consequence was the breakdown of trust in our immigration system and a rising demand that Canadian culture and institutions be shown greater respect.

This has been born out in recent polling. Nearly 60% of Canadians of all backgrounds now claim that newcomers do not share Canadian values and fail to integrate themselves within Canadian society, while 51% expect government institutions to do more to integrate newcomers and 55% believe that immigrants must adopt broad mainstream values and traditions. However we may feel about that, it seems that Canadians have no doubt that there is indeed something to belong to here, and that citizenship is important and valuable.

Bill C-3 aims to reform Canada's Citizenship Act. It addresses the first-generation limit on citizenship by descent, which has prevented some Canadians born abroad from passing on citizenship to their children born outside the country.

The bill responds to a 2023 Ontario Superior Court ruling declaring the first-generation limit unconstitutional and seeks to restore citizenship to the so-called lost Canadians. This ruling could have been appealed, and perhaps should have been.

Nevertheless, there are perhaps some injustices and problems, which this bill may correct, but as it stands, I fear it will do more harm than good. Removing the first-generation limit without a cap on generational descent will extend citizenship to persons with little or no tie to Canada, perhaps indefinitely. This may exacerbate citizenship tourism, whereby people claim the benefits of citizenship, such as health care or a passport, without contributing to Canadian society.

For a Canadian citizen parent born outside Canada to pass on citizenship to his or her children born abroad, Bill C-3 requires that the parent must demonstrate "a substantial connection to Canada". These are fine words, but according to the bill, this amounts only to having been present in Canada for a mere 1,095 cumulative days before the child's birth. That is only three years, which may be accrued at any point in the parent's life—

• (1645)

Many Canadians will, I think, rightly wonder whether this really constitutes a substantial connection to our country. Many will expect that the government require more of its citizens.

[*Translation*]

Thank you again for your attention, Madam Chair and honorable members of the committee. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bonner.

[*English*]

Mr. Chapman, you are next for five minutes.

Don Chapman (M.S.C., Lost Canadians): I am the head of the Lost Canadians. I coined the term.

I lost my citizenship when I was six years old, because I was born in Canada, in wedlock and not adopted. Had any of those factors been different, I would have remained Canadian.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I have a point of order, Madam Chair. We're not getting interpretation.

There we go.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll start again.

Don Chapman: I'm the head of the Lost Canadians. I coined the term. I lost my citizenship at age six because I was born in Canada, in wedlock, and not adopted. Had any of those factors been different, I would have remained Canadian. Are you confused? Well, of course, because the laws were and remain a convoluted mess. It

took me 47 years to become Canadian again, as I was forced into becoming an immigrant and naturalized citizen.

To be clear, Bill C-3 is not about immigration. It's the result of a court decision putting fairness into our Citizenship Act, righting historic wrongs and bringing the act into compliance with the charter. Saying that lost Canadians are immigrants is absurd. It's a citizenship issue, period. To repeat, Bill C-3 is not about immigration.

Bill C-3 fixes the unconstitutionality of the first generation born abroad and, for the first time ever, makes the Citizenship Act charter-compliant. Women will have equal rights going forward and backward. How ironic that the same gender discrimination was in the Indian Act. Bill S-3 fixed that, with retroactive effect going back to 1870. Indigenous women could now confer Indian status but not citizenship, which, of course, begs a constitutional question about unequal rights still embedded in the Citizenship Act. Bill C-3 corrects that injustice.

For reference, because it's applicable, a second Supreme Court ruling, from the U.K., responded, in Advocate General for Scotland v. Romein. It means that no political party here has a choice. It's a matter of upholding the charter and the rule of law. Years ago, Canadian women who married Americans were stripped of their citizenship—and, hey, what you don't know about citizenship law can come back to hurt you or a loved one. Canada's very adept at making its own people stateless, with victims often being women and children. Bill C-3 corrects this as well.

Please get past surface reactions about non-mitigating factors like criminal background checks, which, for lost Canadians, was declared unconstitutional in a 1997 Supreme Court ruling: *Benner v. Canada*. Look also at the December 2007 CIMM committee report, which reads, and I quote:

Background checks are only appropriate for candidates seeking a grant of citizenship as opposed to those for whom citizenship is a birthright [and] this implies that lost Canadians should not be subjected to background checks as a precondition for having their citizenship resumed.

The case is closed on background checks—that is, unless you wish to go against the unanimous Supreme Court ruling, which, then, is a violation of the rule of law. Per the court, you don't get to pick and choose. Everyone must be entitled to the same rights, and lost Canadians have a right to citizenship, so you, as parliamentarians...it's your job to defend and protect that right. If we must undergo criminal background checks to secure our constitutional right of citizenship, then it must be so for all Canadians. If we must own land or pay taxes, it has to apply to everyone—including newborns.

By conflating the issue with immigration, one, MPs don't understand the difference, which is frightening because, when I am on an airplane, I expect the pilot to know how to fly and, likewise, I expect MPs to know their portfolio; two, MPs understand but choose to fearmonger and mislead—just look south to see the deterioration of a country when a major political party goes down that path—or three, it's a combination of one and two, with all scenarios being bad, leaving Canadians, including children, in harm's way.

Knowledge should win the day, which is impossible by not embracing it. One political party won't meet with me. My calls go unanswered. When I went to testify years ago, the members controlling the committee went in camera and cancelled the meeting. No lost Canadian testified on a bill about lost Canadians, and before I testified on Bill S-230, I was asked not to divulge the accurate numbers. There's a pattern here. Also, with my being given just five minutes to testify, well, no wonder we're at 12 lost Canadian bills and counting. Would you get on a plane with a pilot who had just five minutes' worth of flight instruction?

I'm expecting you to do your job and, really, learn about the issue. Canada unconstitutionally denying Canadians their identity and culture through citizenship and violating the UN conventions on the rights of the child, the reduction of statelessness and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, is unconscionable.

The Bloc certainly understands and defends culture and identity.

• (1650)

Bill C-3 is the best remedy, as is.

Don Chapman: I'd like to have amendments, but we can't delay. The suffering of fellow Canadians must end. I urge you not to have your name recorded for supporting human rights abuses and unequal rights. Rather, vote for Bill C-3.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chapman.

Who will be speaking on this?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques, you have the floor for five minutes.

Jason Jacques (Interim Parliamentary Budget Officer, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer): Good day, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

[*English*]

We published our independent cost estimate of Bill C-3, formerly Bill C-71, during the 44th Parliament, in December 2024.

Based on our analysis, we estimate the total net cost of the proposed amendments to the Citizenship Act would be \$20.8 million over five years, beginning in the current fiscal year of 2025-26. The total number of persons who would be affected is estimated to be around 115,000 over the same period.

[*Translation*]

We would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have regarding our analysis of Bill C-3.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: That was well short of five minutes, so thank you very much.

Now we will start our first round of questions at six minutes.

We are going to begin with Mr. Costas Menegakis.

Please go ahead for six minutes.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing before us today.

Mr. Bonner, you've written, "It's time to totally overhaul Canada's immigration system," and, "To put it bluntly, many of the immigrants that we attract and keep shouldn't be here."

Could you expand on these statements, given that Bill C-3 allows people who have never been in Canada to become Canadian citizens without taking the citizenship test, without having knowledge of one of the two official languages of the country and without requiring any security checks? What risks do you see with this approach?

Michael Bonner: Thank you.

My principal concern is to restore confidence in an immigration system that has served our country very well for rather a long time, and not only to restore confidence but also to restore the former consensus, which held good in this country and is not reflected elsewhere anymore, unfortunately.

We should also be wary about taking headlines from the things that I've written. The comment I was making in some of those things you referred to is a question of economic integration. Canada has been doing a worse and worse job on that score over recent years. The number of people who take citizenship and then leave the country, I think, speaks for itself and shows that this is a significant challenge the country has not been able to address.

I'd like to pivot back to what I said originally. The question is about restoring confidence in a system that I think has been badly shaken over the past several years. There are certainly merits, as we have heard, to the concept of restoring citizenship to those from whom it should not have been alienated in the first place, and that is something that merits exactly the kind of examination that's going on here right now.

There are many larger and broader questions pertaining to the integrity of our immigration system and public confidence in it, which this is not going to address, and if we get this wrong, it will only add to the problem.

• (1655)

Costas Menegakis: Considering that the Liberals have already wrecked our once-proud immigration system, I agree with a lot of the points you've made. We've had seven immigration ministers over the last 10 years, and it appears to be a problem finding a competent minister to run the file.

Do you think there would be the capacity to process thousands of new citizenship applications, given the current backlog and processing times today?

Michael Bonner: Depending on the number of persons involved, that could be a very serious and certainly realistic concern. To judge by past examples, this is a concern that already exists within the system as it is.

I don't know if anyone has yet put forward numbers with confidence as to how many people this would affect. I've seen reports in the media of some figures that go as high as a million. Until we know that for certain, I would be very wary.

Costas Menegakis: Do you believe that Bill C-3 is missing an opportunity to clearly articulate and test for an understanding of the fundamental democratic values that you advocate for and that are expected of all Canadian citizens?

Michael Bonner: I think that's something that should be given very serious consideration. Again, it speaks to the general loss of confidence that has taken place in our immigration system. We should get that right above all.

Costas Menegakis: Thank you, Mr. Bonner.

I'd like to shift over to the PBO officials who are here with us. Thank you for joining us.

Bill C-3 is a cut-and-paste bill. The minister was elected on April 28. Within a number of days, possibly a week or two, she was appointed a minister. A couple of days after that, she changed the title of Bill C-71 to Bill C-3. Have you seen any change? Have you done an update on the numbers you provided us? Is it still about 115,000 people who are going to be affected?

Jason Jacques: We've looked at the legislation, and it seems to be substantially the same as the previous bill we costed for the previous Parliament. That cost estimate was prepared in December.

I noticed that, during the minister's earlier testimony, there was a reference to updated numbers with respect to 4,200 claims coming on. We haven't seen that data, so potentially we could circle back and update it. I would say that, substantially, we wouldn't be here at committee today if we weren't confident in the numbers that are currently on the website.

Costas Menegakis: I tend to believe your number.

Jason Jacques: If it wasn't useful for Parliamentarians, we'd take it down.

Costas Menegakis: Have you done any estimates on how much these new Canadian citizens by descent would cost taxpayers in extra social and health care cost?

Jason Jacques: No, we have not. The cost estimate is squarely focused around the cost of applications and processing.

Costas Menegakis: It's about 115,000 people. We don't know what impact it is going to have from a cost perspective.

Have you done any estimates on how this would impact the job crisis we're currently facing in Canada?

Jason Jacques: We have not specifically with respect to this legislation. If it is the will and the interest of the committee, obviously the committee can pass a motion, and we'd be happy to go back and prepare additional estimates on this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jacques.

Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

Now we go to Ms. Salma Zahid for six minutes.

Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for appearing before the committee today.

My first few questions are for Mr. Chapman.

Thank you for coming back again and talking about the issue of the lost Canadians.

As you know, there have been many legislative attempts to address the lost Canadians issue. We will both recall Bill S-245 sponsored by Conservative Senator Yonah Martin and in the House by MP Jasraj Singh Hallan. The Conservatives stalled their own bill for 12 meetings over three months back in 2023 before using procedural tactics to ensure it that never came back for debate in the House.

What message did that Conservative obstructionism send to lost Canadians and their families?

• (1700)

Don Chapman: That was the second bill I did with Senator Martin. Up until two days before the testimony, Senator Martin was all in for amendments. That changed. It was almost like she got an edict from the party to say "no more amendments", because she had been all in.

It was also interesting that Mr. Poilievre's office sent an email, which I have a copy of, saying that he was all in for Bill S-245. They weren't in for the amendments, and I can't help but look at the sincerity of those amendments. One of them was that there would not be any citizenship ceremonies on Yom Kippur. Today's Yom Kippur. We can have meetings on this day. I didn't think it was sincere.

They brought up the same issues of security, language and so forth, which brings me to Finley Weinberger. He got a letter saying that he had to put forth a citizenship knowledge test for language and so forth. Finley had just turned two years old. Again, this is not about anything to do with that. The courts have ruled that, going back to 1997, this is an issue about fairness, about the courts, about the rule of law and the charter. No party gets a choice here. This is what the law says.

If we talk about confidence in the system, we have to talk about confidence in the citizenship system and confidence in the court. This is not an immigration issue, period.

Salma Zahid: Thank you, Mr. Chapman.

We just heard some of the Conservatives' questions to the other witnesses focusing on the cost of restoring the citizenship of lost Canadians. They seem to be putting forward an argument that it is too expensive for Canada to recognize the citizenship of people who have, in many cases, lived here all their lives, contributed to Canada, paid their taxes and always thought of themselves as Canadians.

Do you think it is right to put a cost on being a Canadian?

Don Chapman: Is that for me?

Salma Zahid: Yes.

Don Chapman: Absolutely not. In Canada, when you take a citizenship ceremony, it's a two-way street. They say that you have an obligation as a citizen, but likewise, a country has an obligation to its citizens. One of the obligations all governments around the world are supposed to adhere to is to protect the rights of their citizens and make life better for their citizens. It's not a cost function.

The court in this case, in Bjorkquist, did not say, "Protect these people up to a certain price tag." It said that this a right—done. There should be no issues on the money. Actually, when it comes to the money, it's interesting. Bill C-37 was a Conservative bill. It's almost as though this side and this side switched places, because years ago, 20 years ago, when I was sitting in the witness stand, the Liberals were saying the same thing about security background and knowledge. It was exactly the opposite, except different parties.

For the Conservatives, I have the interim leader on camera saying that it's an irrelevant issue: So what if it's 200,000; we need people. This is not an immigration issue; it's a citizenship issue. If you're going to start taking away rights of citizens, what do we do? Do we take away the entire citizenship of everybody in Victoria? No. It's a citizenship issue. They have rights, and they are quite within their powers to expect the government to protect their rights.

Salma Zahid: Definitely it is about rights.

Can you explain a bit more why you would say this bill is about restoring citizenship and is not about immigration?

• (1705)

Don Chapman: That's what the courts ruled. There was nothing about immigration in that court case, and there was nothing about immigration in the Benner v. Canada case. This is to restore citizenship. They declared the law unconstitutional, period, so how do you want to go forward? Do you want to make the Citizenship Act charter-compliant and have it conform with the Constitution of Canada or not?

This is about citizenship. I know, because I've been 47 years, as I said, trying to get my citizenship restored, and I've been on this path since I was about 10 years old, listening to Canadians over and over and over again—by the way, everybody's guilty here, all parties—saying I had to have a criminal background check and so forth to get into Canada, to get into my own country. It's an insult.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chapman.

Thank you, Ms. Zahid.

[Translation]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for six minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here today.

My first questions will be for the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I asked the minister earlier how many people could be granted new citizenship under Bill C-3. She was unable to give me a number, yet your department can.

Shouldn't a minister introducing such a bill be able to give a figure if you're able to do so? What's the difference between IRCC's calculations and the Parliamentary Budget Officer's calculations?

Louis Perrault (Director, Economic Analysis, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer): The number we have is obviously an estimate. When we look at all the estimates on the Canadian diaspora, we see that they differ considerably. They can vary between 300,000 and four million people.

We relied on a Statistics Canada study. This demographic study from 2018, I believe, compiles data on the Canadian diaspora from 1921 to 2016. This diaspora is divided into three groups, one of which is made up of citizens by descent. We took that number and used certain assumptions to come up with our figure of 115,000 people.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: In the same report, you also estimated the costs at \$20.8 million.

How did you come up with that number?

Louis Perrault: We used the four groups that were affected by what was then Bill C-71. We asked some departments about the cost of obtaining proof of citizenship and the cost of granting citizenship. We also contacted Global Affairs Canada to obtain costs for consular services in normal and extraordinary cases, such as repatriation cases, in the event of war or other circumstances, so we multiplied all those costs to arrive at \$20.8 million.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Prime Minister Carney's directives to all his ministers last summer said that spending should be cut in certain areas.

Do you believe that IRCC's current resources are sufficient to process the new applications that will arise as a result of Bill C-3, if it is passed quickly?

Jason Jacques: We haven't done an assessment of the department's budget, so it's difficult for us to tell you definitively whether there are enough resources or not.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Have you received any assessments from IRCC in terms of who would be affected and cost assessments?

Did you ask them questions, and did the department respond to you?

Louis Perrault: In October 2024, we asked the department whether there were any estimates related to the number of Canadian citizens who would be affected by Bill C-71. We were told there weren't any. We were also given some leads as to how we could estimate that number.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: So, clearly, IRCC told you that it had not done that work.

• (1710)

Louis Perrault: Not to our knowledge.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Earlier, I reminded the minister of how the Immigration Act, which falls under her jurisdiction, works. She told us that the 1,095-day period we use, which is entirely appropriate, was copied from the 1,095 days required of permanent residents. However, she forgot that, for permanent residents, it has to be over a five-year period, whereas in Bill C-3, it's 1,095 non-consecutive days, regardless of the period.

Do you have any numbers?

I imagine you don't have any, but would you be able to redo—I'm asking this in all naïveté—a calculation, if we added the criteria of 1,095 days, or three years, over a five-year period?

Could your department provide us with an estimate?

Louis Perrault: At this time, there's no specific estimate for the 1,095 days. We have an estimate that the number of potential Canadians who could be affected by Bill C-71 is about 115,000. Theoretically, more people from the Canadian diaspora could be affected by this measure.

On the issue of the 1,095 days, I imagine that the data would probably be difficult to obtain quickly like that. So we would need to think about it.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I tried.

Mr. Chapman, in your opinion, could certain cases of lost citizens not be covered by Bill C-3 in its current form?

[*English*]

Don Chapman: Yes, there are. It does not correct all the categories, but it comes very close.

Do you know what? There are always going to be problems.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chapman, and thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

That is the end of our first round. We are now on to our second round.

We'll go to Mr. Ma for five minutes.

Michael Ma: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The following questions are for Dr. Bonner.

You published a study in May of this year, entitled “Repairing the fray”, in which you investigated Canada's immigration policy. On page 18, you wrote, “Nearly 60 percent of Canadians of all backgrounds now claim that newcomers do not share Canadian values and that they fail to integrate themselves within Canadian society.”

Do you feel that this lack of integration could be addressed with Bill C-3's substantial connection test, by adding, firstly, a language proficiency test in either English or French, and secondly, a citizenship test requirement?

Michael Bonner: The answer is yes and no.

In principle, I think something needs to be done about the problems you cite there. Those aren't numbers that I made up. Those are from reputable polling firms, as you can find in the footnotes to my study. I would be very surprised if that number had not in fact risen.

Those sorts of safeguards—not only cultural, but also economic integration—need to be built into the immigration system in general, not just into one bill. It is also a philosophy that the country as a whole ought to adopt.

If you look at the context of that statistic you cite there, the context is the idea that there is nothing into which to integrate. The theory is that there is a kind of cultural void in Canada and therefore it doesn't require any kind of effort to acculturate anyone, or there are no particular values, no particular principles. That was a refrain that was often heard over the past decade. I think Canadians know that isn't true.

So yes, we should do that, but that must be a philosophy adopted into the immigration system—our attitude to citizenship and our attitude to the country as a whole.

Michael Ma: Thank you.

On that same page, you wrote, “More and more [newcomers] are leaving, having formed no permanent connection[s] to the country, and moving on to other economic opportunities abroad.”

Further, you cited a study that found that “25 percent of all immigrants will leave within 25 years and a little over a third of them will do so within the first five years.” You place special emphasis on noting that, among those who leave, “48 percent are economic immigrants.”

Do you feel that the lack of connection to Canada could be addressed through Bill C-3's “substantial connection” test, by adding a longer residency requirement?

• (1715)

Michael Bonner: Yes. In general, I think that should be done for citizenship policy.

The economic immigration statistic that you mention goes back, if I remember correctly, to a study—not one that I did, but one that I reference—called “The Leaky Bucket”, a very memorable title.

I interpret that to be actually quite an alarming fact. Economic immigrants are chosen because they wish to invest here. They have offers of jobs already. The skills and so forth that they bring, or the level of education and skills training brought to the country, are those that we need. They're vital to us.

If they are leaving, I think that speaks to a very serious problem that we need to address and look into. Part of the problem is undoubtedly connected with that feeling of scarcity and of strain on infrastructure that we have all felt—especially people of my generation—over recent years. Certainly, I think more could be done to retain the highly skilled and well-trained people who wish to come here and integrate, and the fact that we don't is a problem.

Again, some sort of solution needs to be found. Yes, it may be wise to build it into Bill C-3, but it must be built into the immigration system in general.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bonner.

Thank you, Mr. Ma.

Our next questioner is Mr. Fragiskatos for five minutes.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all of you for being here.

Mr. Chapman, you made the point in this meeting and your testimony that the issue before us is not one of immigration. It's about citizenship. Thank you for making that clear. I think it reminds us of why we're here with respect to Bill C-3.

Earlier today, we heard a lot about “chain migration”. I had to check: I felt like I was in another country, listening to a particular president who loves that phrase. I think you can pick up on what I'm talking about there.

Without digressing, I want you to go back and talk about this from a fairness perspective and also, in looking at Bill C-3, as putting forward a set of measures that would ensure consistency in our citizenship law.

Don Chapman: The citizenship law has never been terribly consistent, and IRCC is consistently inconsistent, so it's been a real problem. Again, there are at least 15 categories of lost Canadians. Most have been fixed.

I've been fighting it all my life. I was six years old when Canada took away my citizenship, and I've never heard any argument other than what's coming out of here, that I'm trying to immigrate back to my own country and so forth. I always found that very insulting. I was born a Canadian citizen, and these people have a constitutional right to citizenship, not a constitutional right to immigrate—anybody can immigrate. If we're talking about chain immigration, there's one way that anybody can come to Canada and get in. Just have your baby born on Canadian soil. That's *jus soli*. Anybody who's not a Canadian can arrive and have a baby, and that's it, you're in.

Fair has to be equal on both sides. If we're going to go with 1,095 days for immigrants, we have to go with 1,095 days for lost Canadians. Here's the problem with the consecutive. I was an airline pilot. I left the country for two weeks every month. I could never in 40 years have gotten the consecutive. That's out. Natural-

ized Canadians don't have to do consecutive. On top of that, they have two other ways they can prove their substantial connection. That is not true for lost Canadians. We just have to make it equal.

As for being consecutive, Canadians—and part of the Bjorkquist case was section 6 of the charter on mobility rights. One of the members of this committee was married to an American and spent the COVID year down in Oklahoma. She would have lost her citizenship over that years ago.

• (1720)

Peter Fragiskatos: Okay, Mr. Chapman. I have only about a minute and a half left.

Can I ask you about what we've heard at committee about the number of those who would potentially become citizens? Can you add some nuance to that? I respect the work of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, but there's a number here of 100,000 plus. That is a number without a lot of context—which I'm not expecting from the PBO as it's not their job to provide that—but you have that particular context, I think, because you've written on this widely. You've appeared before committees in studies of previous iterations, of Bill C-71, for example, and other bills that have been before us in previous years.

Talk about the nuance of that, because I think committee members might be left with the impression that the door is being opened here to 100,000-plus people arriving into the country, when I think that's certainly not the case.

Don Chapman: Of course, again, the courts didn't put a number on it. One of the greatest cases would be *The Advocate General for Scotland v. Romein*. They did the same thing basically as C-3, but here's the point: Bill C-37 opened the door to a million people, maybe two million, and in the 16 years since that became effective, 20,000 people showed up at Canada's door to say they wanted to be Canadian. A lot of those people lived in Canada. We're talking maybe tens of thousands of Mennonites who already live here would now get their citizenship. They're probably part of that 115,000.

It's not just a matter of how many people there are. It's how many people are going to show up. Make no assumption that these are people who are going to be on social services. These are people who are contributing members of society. They already are; they just want to be legitimized.

Peter Fragiskatos: Many of them are already here—

Don Chapman: They are already here. Count at 115,000, 1% or 2%.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chapman. Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Now we have Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

You have two and a half minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As legislators, we try to get as much information as possible. That's one of the reasons you're with us.

I want to come back to the number of people affected by the bill. You're talking about 115,000 people. I imagine it was complicated for you to develop an analysis grid to arrive at that figure. You've probably had different scenarios with a number of people higher or lower than that.

How did you come up with 115,000? Are you able to say whether there may be a lot more people affected or a lot fewer?

Louis Perrault: As I said earlier, our analysis is based mainly on a Statistics Canada study that provided three levels of estimates.

We took the one in the middle. One is lower, and their number is about half of ours. The other one is a little higher, one and a half times higher than ours. In the case of the Canadian diaspora that would be made up of citizens by descent, we used a figure of about two million people before reducing it first to one million people, or then increasing it to 3.4 million people. In short, we could cut our figure in half, multiply it by 1.5. That's the simplest way to explain our calculation. That's basically the range we used.

As for the number of people who will apply for citizenship, we made an assumption to arrive at our figure. We think it's reasonable. However, it could be lower or it could be higher.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I imagine that people from the United States would be more likely to apply for citizenship.

Louis Perrault: It's probably for—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I don't think you gave us a country-by-country analysis.

Louis Perrault: No. To refine the estimate, maybe we could look at that, but right now—

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Louis Perrault: —we really took an aggregate number and applied our assumptions to arrive at the—

• (1725)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I tried.

Do you think it's reasonable for a minister to introduce a bill without being able to show how many people it would affect?

Jason Jacques: It's not for us to judge.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jacques.

Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[English]

We have about five minutes left. If it's okay, maybe I'll give two minutes each to the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Bloc.

We are going to start with Mr. Davies.

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Bonner, I was struck by and interested in your comments at the beginning about the value of Canadian citizenship and what it means to be a Canadian citizen, as well as your commentary on the evolution of this sort of postnational philosophy that obviously has not gained the traction that it was...at the time.

I'm curious as to what you think of the provisions—or the lack of provisions—in this bill. For example, there's no language check, no test of citizenship, no knowledge...and no test of self-sustainability once you arrive in Canada. Also, as the minister said, you can have citizenship by cottages, by literally just staying in the country for 1,095 non-consecutive days.

What do you think that this overall philosophy and the approach in this bill mean to you in relation to the value of Canadian citizenship?

Michael Bonner: As I said in my opening remarks, I don't think there's a question as to whether or not there are some people who should have their citizenship restored to them. I don't know if anybody is actually debating that or suggesting that there's some reason to not do that. My concern is that, again, citizenship should count for more in general. The higher priority of the government and of the Canadian public should be to restore confidence in a citizenship policy and an immigration policy that are very often seen together, rather than to do sort of minor tinkering here and there.

Also, if Bill C-3 is gotten wrong and is open to abuse and this is seen in public, it will only add to the problem.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Davies.

Our next questioner will be Ms. Zahid.

You have two minutes.

Salma Zahid: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Chapman, we have been hearing a lot about the term “lost Canadians”. Can you please explain more about what that really means and some of the real people who have found themselves in that category of “lost Canadians”?

Don Chapman: Yes. I very quickly want to make and clarify one comment here. You don't get citizenship for being here for 1,095 days. If you're here for 1,095 days and you're a Canadian, that means that you have the right to confer citizenship to your child. You don't just get to show up, live here and get it. That's an immigrant.

I made up the name “lost Canadians” years ago. Governments don't tend to say, “Look, if you go look under that rock over there, you're going to discover some dirt on our country.” All I knew at the time was that I wasn't Canadian. Then the Internet came out. I put it out there, and people started contacting me. Then we discovered a lot of ways that Canada had been stripping people of their citizenship. For example, here's one that's coming: When did citizenship begin? Well, the government says it began in 1947, but it didn't; it began with Confederation.

There are all kinds of ways, we've discovered, so we've just been categorically calling people like that "lost Canadians". That's how it came about.

Salma Zahid: As we all know, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice has ruled on this issue and allowed for an extension until November 20 for a legislative solution. Could you speak to why it is important that this bill be passed as soon as possible?

Don Chapman: It's because it just opens the floodgates after November 20.

It is interesting to note that prior to Bill C-37, there was no generational limit on citizenship. It had been that way for 146 years, I believe, and Canada was opening the door for immigration, so we've already had unlimited generational citizenship. Bill C-3 does not do that; it just corrects an unconstitutional part.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chapman.

Thank you, Ms. Zahid.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for two minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses. We had very different opinions and they gave us a lot of relevant information to help us make an informed choice.

Officials from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, you told us that you estimated the cost of implementing the bill at \$20.8 million, which takes into account the verification of 1,095 days of residence, among other things.

Earlier, I raised the fact that before 2019, exits from Canadian territory weren't tracked by the Canadian government. Even today, even for international flights, it's not necessarily sent directly to the government.

Have you taken that variable into account? If not, do you think it will be even more tedious to verify the 1,095 days of residence?

• (1730)

Louis Perrault: No, that wasn't taken into account. We haven't been given many details. So that's a very good question, and I think it should be taken into consideration, but I can't answer you.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay.

Unfortunately, that kind of thing sometimes isn't considered when there are a number of files to manage at the same time. Could that be taken into account in a future analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

Jason Jacques: Yes, absolutely. If there's a request or a motion from your committee on that, we'd be happy to revise our estimate. We're here to support you. You're our clients.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you making that request, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe?

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, so we're making that request, Monsieur Jacques.

You have 10 seconds left.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

I'll give you the rest of my time, Mr. Chapman, to make a final comment.

[*English*]

The Chair: With that, I'm sorry, but it's over.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*English*]

I want to say a warm thank you to all of you for your excellent interventions and for all of your contributions to this very important legislation.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 7, for the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-3.

Any amendments must be submitted to the clerk by noon tomorrow, Friday, October 3.

Since it is the end of our meeting time, this meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>