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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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Chair: Julie Dzerowicz





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Tuesday, October 21, 2025

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone.

I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number eight of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

We have two panels with officials today, and I have no doubt that we will have many questions for them.

Before I introduce our witnesses for today, I'd like to give a few reminders.

First, always kindly wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. I will also remind everyone to please not speak over each other, as it will be very hard for our translators to translate, and it makes their job very difficult.

Because I know we have tons of questions but never enough time, I have two cards that I will pull out before the first questioner. A yellow card means that there is one minute left. A red card means that your time is up and your microphone goes off.

Of course, please ensure that all of your comments are addressed through the chair. Members, 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 to all of you for your co-operation.

I have two quick reminders that I want to mention to our committee members. One is that, at a future meeting, we probably should discuss a deadline to submit briefs for Canada's immigration system. It's prudent for us to target some sort of a date, so I want to put everybody on notice that it's something we should discuss.

Second, we do have to set aside time, whether it's 10 or 15 minutes, to give drafting instructions to the analysts regarding the study of the international student program and study permits. I wanted to give advance notice, as there are just a couple of items for us to set aside a little bit of time for in the near future.

With that, let's start our study.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on September 16, the committee is commencing its study of Canada's immigration system. I would now like to welcome our witnesses for today's meeting.

From the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, we have Dr. Harpreet Kochhar, deputy minister; Louise Baird, senior assis-

tant deputy minister, strategic policy; Pemi Gill, assistant deputy minister, service delivery; and Jean-Marc Gionet, acting assistant deputy minister, protection and family programs sector.

Welcome to you all.

From the Immigration and Refugee Board, we have Manon Brassard, chairperson; Roula Eatrides, deputy chairperson, refugee protection division; and Roger Ermuth, executive director.

Up to five minutes will be given for opening remarks to IRCC and to the Immigration and Refugee Board, after which we will proceed with a round of questions.

Welcome, Dr. Harpreet Kochhar. I now invite you to make the opening statement of up to five minutes. Thank you.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar (Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, everyone.

I'd like to acknowledge that we're meeting on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[Translation]

Thank you for undertaking this study on Canada's immigration system. My colleagues and I truly welcome this conversation.

[English]

We share the same goal, a system that Canadians can trust, that newcomers can navigate with clarity and that continues to strengthen our country.

Over the last decade, the department has undergone a major transformation. We have modernized our systems and processes to make them more efficient, transparent and client-focused. As a result, straightforward applications move faster, errors are reduced and officers can dedicate more time to complex cases. Applicants also get clearer information on where their case stands online.

[Translation]

While we are proud of these programs, we know the system remains under pressure.

We saw significant increases in asylum claims and rapid growth in the number of international students and temporary workers.

[English]

That has placed additional demands on housing, health care and social services and challenged public sentiment on immigration. To restore the balance and trust, we are adjusting our programs and policies.

We did set caps for temporary residents and are strengthening eligibility and integrity measures so that this population's share returns to sustainable levels.

Changes made to our work permit and international student programs have already resulted in fewer new arrivals, over 235,000 fewer between January and July compared to the same period last year.

• (1535)

[Translation]

We're also striking a balance on protecting vulnerable people while ensuring our asylum system is strong and fair.

[English]

In 2023, the safe third country agreement was expanded to cover our entire shared land border, resulting in a significant drop in irregular crossings.

[Translation]

Asylum claims are down by more than 30% year-to-date, with notable decreases at airports and inland.

We're working on additional ways to strengthen the asylum system.

[English]

New rules in Bill C-12 would make a claim ineligible to be referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board if it is filed more than a year after a person first arrives in Canada or if they cross between the ports of entry and file after the two-week period covered by the safe third country agreement. These reforms would discourage misuse of the system and protect it from potential surges.

More broadly, IRCC places the highest priority on safety and integrity across all programs. Everyone applying to come to Canada is carefully screened. We work with CBSA, CSIS and the RCMP to manage immigration screening, security and enforcement.

[Translation]

We continue to update risk indicators, expand information sharing with allies and improve tools to make our officers' decisions robust.

[English]

The government will soon table its annual report on immigration. It will outline our immigration levels targets for 2026 and projections for 2027 and 2028, for both temporary and permanent residents. Our department's focus remains on keeping the number of newcomers sustainable.

Finally, I will touch on francophone immigration.

[Translation]

We have a variety of strategies to grow the number of French-speaking newcomers across Canada. This is crucial to maintain linguistic duality and support vibrant communities from Moncton to Whitehorse.

[English]

Madam Chair and members, our department continues to adapt and modernize to meet Canada's needs, while keeping fairness and public confidence at the heart of everything we do.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That was record time, thank you so much.

We have Ms. Brassard from the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Please go ahead. You have five minutes.

**Manon Brassard (Chairperson, Immigration and Refugee Board):** Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for inviting us to speak about the Immigration and Refugee Board today.

The IRB is a tribunal. It was established by Parliament in 1989. Its mandate is to resolve immigration and refugee matters efficiently, fairly and in accordance with the law.

[Translation]

The decisions which we render must conform not only with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the jurisprudence established by the Federal Courts and the Supreme Court of Canada, but also with international conventions to which Canada is a signatory.

[English]

The IRB issued 102,000 decisions last year, which is a historic level. Of those, over 78,000 were decisions from the refugee protection division. This is worth mentioning, considering that the IRB was set to issue 60,000 files last year. The 78,000 represents a 42% productivity increase from the year before, which was the result of hard work, a focus on simplifying our processes, process automation where possible, and rigorous case management.

Today, we're scheduling close to 310 refugee hearings a day. We aim to achieve up to 85,000 finalizations this year. To do so, we need to continue our transformation, allowing us to manage our caseloads as one national inventory and to maximize the efficiencies offered by becoming more and more a digital tribunal.

[Translation]

These results are somehow overshadowed by the fact that 176,000 claims were referred to the IRB last year and a further 155,000 the year before. For comparison, we received 79,000 in 2022–23 and 32,500 the year before. These high levels are therefore fairly new. We expect to receive around 100,000 by the end of this fiscal year. That leaves us, as of September 30, with a caseload of 296,000 claims, of which 103,000 are not ready to be heard because they are incomplete.

A case decided today would have taken on average 22 months. In other words, a claimant would have waited 22 months here for a decision rendered today; 16 months are attributed to IRB's wait time, while the remaining six are attributed to partners due to incomplete files.

• (1540)

[English]

We have made and continue to make progress in increasing the number of cases finalized and maintaining the quality of our decisions so as to meet the tests of the Federal Court.

[Translation]

We have made a lot of progress to achieve our target, which is to render as many decisions as referred claims in one year, but we are not there yet.

[English]

I started my comments outlining the nature of the rights at stake and the corresponding obligations to hear and decide these cases. I'll end by saying that I am, and so is every board member of the IRB, very aware of the task at hand—to make transparent, justified and clear decisions quickly, fairly and effectively in accordance with the law.

Madam Chair, I will stop here and welcome questions.

**The Chair:** Wonderful. Thank you. We're going to need the extra minute for those answers and questions.

To begin, we start with Ms. Rempel Garner for six minutes.

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

To the deputy minister, on what date will the immigration levels plan be tabled?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That precise date hasn't been decided, but it is generally before November 1 of every year.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Do you anticipate it before the end of October?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I wouldn't say I have an exact date, but that normally happens before November 1.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you.

What was the 2025 target in last year's levels plan for temporary residents, in total?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** For the temporary residents' total, the overall target was 673,650.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** How many permits have been issued as of the end of August of this year?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I can actually get you the information very quickly here.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I have 773,000. Is that right?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I'm looking at the total number of work permits issued, if that is the question.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** On the 673,000 you had, what is the congruent number that has been issued to date? I have 773,000. It was data you posted about 48 hours ago or so.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I don't have that number, Madam.

Madam Chair, I do have a split of that, which is a little different from what Madam Rempel Garner said.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** What I have from your website on data that you just posted is 773,000 temporary permits. We're over halfway through the year and you have already exceeded the levels plan temporary permits issued by 100,000. Is that correct?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** May I ask Pemi to answer?

**Pemi Gill (Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** I'd like to provide a clarification. The levels plan for temporary residents for 2025, the 673,000 number, is for admissions. That is persons who've arrived physically in Canada, whereas the number of permits issued represents people we've given a permit to.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I have 773,000. Look, what I'm trying to say here is—

**Pemi Gill:** I apologize for the interruption, but their arrival spans multiple years.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Okay.

Have you advised the government that they have already exceeded the levels for this year?

**Pemi Gill:** We haven't yet exceeded the levels for this year, as the target within the levels plan for temporary residents is for arrivals within Canada. It's new arrivals versus approving somebody and then they have a period of time to arrive.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I know unemployment in Ontario is at about 700,000. The data we have is quite high. Where are these people going to work?

• (1545)

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I think what we have to clarify is that the folks here are already in the system. Either they are employed, or they have the work permit, or they are a student. There's a combination of many....

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** There are still several hundred thousand new permits that are being issued across the different temporary resident strains. Is that correct?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We do have quite a bit of reduction in—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** No, we're not talking about reductions. I'm saying that you're still adding several hundred thousand people to the system. Is that correct?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We are adding some to it, but not a huge number.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you.

Why are you adding several hundred thousand more people to the system when youth unemployment is at 14.7% and we have unprecedented hospital wait times.

Why is that number not far lower?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** To answer that question, we are looking at a particular talent, where we need people who will fill those labour shortage gaps, whether it—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Oh, great. Youth unemployment is at 14.7%. Are you suggesting that we need more people in jobs that could be filled by Canadian youth?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I'm not suggesting that we need more people to fill those jobs, but we have to match the needs of the regions and the national skill sets that we need through new skills. Either we develop the workforce strategy domestically, so that we can train them, or we will bring the new people.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** We have a 14.7% unemployment rate and there are 700—

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you.

You guys are on track to exceed your targets. We have a youth jobs crisis, yet have you advised the government to pause right now, let's say, temporary foreign worker permits in anything outside of agriculture or fisheries? Have you advised them to do that?

Why are you still accepting LMIA's for jobs that could be filled with students? Have you advised the government to stop that?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** The aspect I mentioned earlier was that we're trying to actually bank mostly those folks who we need—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Why aren't you betting on Canadians?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Well, the Canadian—

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

The witness was trying to answer, and he was stopped mid-sentence. If we could get full answers.... The questions have been full, certainly, but if we can let witnesses complete their answer, that would be, I think, helpful for testimony purposes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** On that point of order, before you rule, Madam Chair, I know that my colleagues in the Liberal Party don't like my questions because they speak to the fact that the Liberal government is exceeding temporary foreign work permits to the extent that Canadian students don't have jobs.

My asking, "Why aren't they betting on Canadians?", is material, and with the time that I have left, I would like the deputy minister to clarify why they are still issuing temporary foreign work permits.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** I would like to raise a question of personal privilege.

**The Chair:** Hold on a second.

On both sides, they're not points of order.

I will give 10 or 12 seconds for Mr. Kochhar to respond, and then that's time.

**Sameer Zuberi:** I would like to raise a question of personal privilege. I don't know what the rules say about that.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Zuberi.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you.

I just heard some imputation about what Liberal members think or don't think. I personally never expressed myself. I don't know if that was—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's debate.

On a point of order—

**The Chair:** That's not a question of privilege or a point of order.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Madam Chair, do I have the floor?

It was an imputation on me as a Liberal member.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr.—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Can I actually raise a point of order on that question?

Madam Chair, at every meeting, when I ask questions—tough questions—to officials on the Liberal government's failures on the immigration policy, my colleagues in the Liberal Party interrupt me—

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, that's—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Every time—

**The Chair:** That is not a point of order, and you know it.

We're going to give another 10 seconds—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** It is. It's on decorum. It's actually on decorum. My Liberal colleagues continually interrupt me.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, that's not a point of order.

Mr. Kochhar, you have 10 seconds to finish up your answer, please.

Then we go to Ms. Zahid.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

What I was mentioning was that, yes, we actually focus our attention first of all on those who are domestic workforce, so that we can retool them so that they can fill in those job market gaps—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** You're still bringing in hundreds of thousands of temporary workers, aren't you?

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, please do not overspeak. It's very hard for the translators.

You have five more seconds, Mr. Kochhar.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** What we are planning, as such, is, again, bringing in those skill sets that are not available in Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Ms. Zahid.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, I rise on a point of order.

**The Chair:** I am listening, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

• (1550)

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** You referred to this briefly, Madam Chair, but I just want to remind the committee that our wonderful interpreters, who perform outstanding work that is absolutely essential to ensure compliance with the Official Languages Act, have a hard time when everyone is speaking at the same time. I know unilingual anglophones understand each other, but people watching at home are trying to follow the discussion, and unfortunately they can't. Furthermore, to ensure the health and safety of our interpreters, I kindly ask that each person press their small button when it's their turn to speak. Let us try not to talk over each other—it will be easier on our ears and support the health and safety of our wonderful interpreters.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you for that reminder, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

Ms. Zahid, you have six minutes.

**Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for appearing before the committee.

My first question is for the officials from IRCC.

I would like to talk about the temporary resident pathway for Palestinians in Gaza with Canadian family ties. This program, when it was launched, was launched with great promise and hope, but very few people have gotten out to Canada under this program. Some people who were able to reach Egypt have been stalled there. They have not been able to get out of Egypt.

With a ceasefire in place, what is your department doing to facilitate the safe passage to Canada for qualified extended families of Canadians seeking temporary refuge?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** There was one key thing on this one. We created a program that would allow almost 5,000 individuals to apply through the special program in order to come to Canada. The unfortunate part of that was that we had to go through levels of

scrutiny and security with COGAT, which is the controlling agency that is part of Israeli defence. It would actually vet those names and, accordingly, release them through the Rafah border.

There were only two borders that were open, Kerem Shalom and Rafah. Since then, Rafah has been closed for many months, so the people have not been able to come out of the Rafah border. However, for those who have made their way by other means—for example, consular cases and others—we have been processing them in Cairo, Egypt. We get the biometrics done and bring them here.

We have some data showing that we have brought almost 700 people to Canada, but they are a combination of consular cases as well as those who have made their way out on their own.

The last point I would make is that the Kerem Shalom border was never actually meant for passage by individuals. It was more like a supply place. We have been able to facilitate the passage of some of them with the help of Israel and Amman, Jordan. We had some who had high medical needs, emergencies, or people who needed immediate attention, for example, vulnerable children and families. That has been accomplished.

Since the ceasefire, we're still waiting for them to actually give us a clear signal, so that we can move forward with our plan, as we did for the 5,000 people.

**Salma Zahid:** Yes, there is a lot of concern. I have been hearing from constituents about many who are paying for their relatives in Cairo to stay in hotels, just waiting for their cases to be updated, so that is a very big concern for many constituents.

I have also met with representatives of the Hong Kong, Iranian and Sudanese communities who speak of lengthy processing times for programs from these countries.

What is your message to members of these communities who want to be reunited with their families? I heard from a number of Sudanese communities that for some cases in that special program, 99 months of processing time is coming.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** For this particular aspect, this was a special program that we launched in such a way that it did not have an upward cap. We have facilitated the program based on the levels that are available to us in the yearly immigration level plan.

The yearly immigration level plan actually sets up a fixed capacity model as to how many people we will need to bring in on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, through a crisis response, as well as for economic and family reunification. That is where we have the constraint. We can accommodate the processing and approval only of those people who fit in that level; hence, the forward-looking processing time looks a little longer.

• (1555)

**Salma Zahid:** Thank you.

I think all members here agree that a lot of our immigration case-work is stalled due to lengthy delays for security screening. Some cases have been pending for years and years. I agree with the importance of a thorough security screening, but the process seems to be a black hole, with no accountability or transparency.

I will also put this to CBSA and RCMP officials in the next hour, but to IRCC, are there any reforms you are planning to improve this process?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We work very closely with CBSA, CSIS, RCMP and other security colleagues in terms of determining risk indicators. These actually determine how much of a security screening or comprehensive security screening is done.

CBSA colleagues are going to be available to answer your question. We have a permanent body of senior officials who work together and readjust the risk barometers so that we can actually facilitate or look at the risk indicators in case we have to tighten those things. This lies squarely with CBSA, RCMP and security partners.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, please proceed.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses for their appearance today as part of this important study.

My question is for the deputy minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Do you know Mr. Pierre Guay? Does that name sound familiar?

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I don't think I know that name.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's fine.

Mr. Guay signed huge contracts with the federal government to lease his land to accommodate asylum seekers when Roxham Road was open and people were crossing the border irregularly. Mr. Guay is a big Liberal donor. That information is readily available because he is on the list of donors. Maybe you are hearing this from me for the first time, but Mr. Guay signed contracts with the federal government.

However, I guess you are familiar with the fact that the federal government signed contracts with individuals who were leasing land to accommodate asylum seekers when Roxham Road was open. Is that right, Mr. Deputy Minister?

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That would be something I would not be aware of, because the first contact with anyone who is crossing the border would be the CBSA and not IRCC.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So you cannot tell me whether the federal government's contracts with Mr. Pierre Guay have been terminated since Roxham Road was closed.

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** As I mentioned, this is not something we contracted out.

This might be for other federal government partners, who would probably be able to respond better to that.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has therefore not bothered to find out.

That is just fine, there is no problem, Mr. Deputy Minister.

How many asylum seekers have been sent to other provinces?

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We do not have accurate secondary migration numbers. However, we did a little bit of looking at the previous numbers. When we were looking at the 2024 numbers, we saw that there was around 12% to 14%—I'm going by memory. We can find out what the secondary migration is out of Quebec, if that is the question being asked.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** How long have you been in this position, Mr. Deputy Minister?

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I've been in office since January 2024.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That is great, and it's perfect timing because if I am not mistaken, in June 2024, the then minister Mr. Miller, accompanied by a number of provincial ministers of immigration, announced to great fanfare that he was going to form a committee to distribute asylum seekers throughout the provinces. I remember that because it was a huge press conference. We were told that a committee would be set up.

You were on the job at the time and so I guess you had some responsibility with respect to the formation of this committee. Am I mistaken?

● (1600)

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That is right. It was mentioned by the minister at that time that there would be an interprovincial committee of ministers that would actually be working towards looking at a relocation of asylum seekers.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** How many meetings have taken place since the committee was set up?

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** The committee was set up by the minister. They had, to my knowledge, three meetings on that context.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Who attended the meetings? Are you in a position to share that with the committee?

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That meeting with the minister was actually conducted by the minister. I was a participant.

We can get you the information. We have noted the minutes of that. We can get you how many provinces.... I think most of the provinces did participate in that. Quebec was an observer in that particular....

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** My understanding then is that you will provide the minutes of all these meetings. Can you confirm that with the committee and tell us how long it will take to get access to these minutes?

[*English*]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I promised to answer your question, and we will give you names of those who participated in that. I just mentioned that we have kept minutes of the meeting, which would be under minister's privilege, actually. We can give you the information of who participated and when these were conducted.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** What was the outcome of these committee meetings in relation to the distribution of asylum seekers?

[*English*]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** There was a mixed result from that one. A couple of provinces—two provinces, to be more precise—were interested and have actually followed through via relocating the asylum seekers who were in the hotels.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** What was the outcome? How many people have been involved in this distribution?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm sorry, but you'll have to respond to that in our next round of questioning.

I'm sorry, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Our next round, which is our second round, begins with five-minute rotations.

We'll start with Mr. Menegakis, please.

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

Are you on track to reduce the government-stated target of temporary residents to 5% by the end of this calendar year?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Yes, that is how we are planning for the next couple of years in the number of—

**Costas Menegakis:** Are you on track to meet it this calendar year?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** The target of 5% was supposed to be met by the end of 2027. That's what we are on track for.

**Costas Menegakis:** Okay.

Has the government asked you to complete any analyses on the costs to Canada's health care system that the excessive number of immigrants overall has caused?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We have not actually gone into those levels of detail, but we have consulted with our health care partners, the provinces, the stakeholders and all those who would be in-

involved in health care provision, as well as on housing and employment. We have done extensive stakeholder consultations for that.

**Costas Menegakis:** Did you ever advise Minister Diab or any previous minister that the large number of immigrants coming to Canada was creating challenges in our health care system?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We continually advise our minister about the impacts of the immigration—which does bring a lot of benefit. We have been constantly giving her the information.

**Costas Menegakis:** Have you completed any analyses or has the government asked you to complete an analysis of the impacts on the housing market of the excessive number of immigrants that the Liberal government has allowed into Canada on an annual basis?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We have worked with our colleagues in housing and infrastructure. We have actually done a bit of projection, which allows us to see, if we bring down the levels to 5% before 2027, how it will ease some of the pressure on housing. We've worked with CMHC and housing and infrastructure.

● (1605)

**Costas Menegakis:** Did you advise Minister Diab or any previous minister of the impact on the housing market that this large number of immigrants coming on an annual basis will have, in your discussions and deliberations with the minister?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We are actually advising the minister about what the permanent and temporary levels would result in, in terms of the impact on housing, health and everything.

**Costas Menegakis:** Just as a point of clarification, earlier you said you were on track to reduce the government-stated target on temporary residents to 5% by 2027. The 2025-27 levels plan actually says 5% by end of year 2026.

Are you saying it's 2027 now?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** To our knowledge, 2027 has always been the commitment from this government, and that's how we are targeting that.

**Costas Menegakis:** That's not what the 2025-27 levels plan said, from the information that is available to us.

What would be the most recent internal estimate that the government has on the total number of individuals living in Canada without legal status, currently?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We do count, through Stats Canada and the census, but we would not have any estimation for those who do not have a particular status in Canada. We would not have that information with us.

**Costas Menegakis:** We have no record of the people who have come in and have no legal status but are walking the streets in our country. Is that correct?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That is not the information that we collect, as such.

**Costas Menegakis:** Do you have a handle on how many people are estimated to be in Canada through the temporary foreign worker program, who are actually not working and are still in our country illegally?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We have information about how many of the people have been issued the temporary foreign worker permit, and that is based on what we have done, in terms of the previous years, through LMIA, which is an ESDC thing. We are responsible for issuing the permit. We're not tracking whether they are actually in particular jobs. It is a combined responsibility of ESDC and the enforcement forces.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Menegakis. That's your time.

Next up, for five minutes, we have Mr. Zuberi.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the officials for being here today.

I'd like to continue with the deputy minister and start off with a vote in the House of Commons about vulnerable Uyghurs, which was passed unanimously by our previous prime minister and all parties. All who voted supported the motion to welcome 10,000 Uyghurs to Canada, who are facing great oppression in China.

I'm very happy and pleased that, in the levels plan in 2023, the government indicated that Uyghurs who are deeply vulnerable would be resettled to Canada. I met some who have come to Canada as a result of this program. They're extremely grateful to Canada and Canadians for providing security and safety, which, they said, was the first time they felt and tasted such a thing in their lives, in some cases.

I would like to ask what the progress is in terms of the implementation of M-62, which called for 10,000 vulnerable Uyghurs to be resettled in Canada from third countries. What is the progress, and what are the future expectations for the implementation of this motion and will of Parliament?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I just want to start by saying that we're concerned about the serious human rights violations in Xinjiang affecting Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims. We haven't publicly announced the implementation details about this population in general, and the reasons for that are safety and security risks to the applicants, to our program delivery and referral partners, and also to the Canadian staff. What we can share with you is that, as of September 13 this year, over 140 people have arrived here in Canada, and the department has received applications for more than 740 more applicants, which are still being processed.

As I say that, our first priority is the safety of Uyghurs, who may live in fear of being returned against their will. This is why we do not provide a lot of details concerning the work under way to provide protection for these individuals, as this could put it under further risk. The numbers are something we are constantly watching, and we are actually working our way to bringing them here—as I said, there are 740 in progress.

• (1610)

**Sameer Zuberi:** I'd like to underscore the importance of the implementation of this program, given that it's the only one, to my knowledge, that had a motion in the House of Commons that supports the work you're doing, and to thank you, the ministers who have been responsible during that time and all those working on the program. I want to impress upon you—and, in turn, I hope that you

can thank your colleagues and also impress upon them—the importance of implementing this motion in full.

I'd like to go back to the issue of Sudan. Sudan, as the UN has said, is the most serious and largest humanitarian crisis, affecting millions of people: 12 million have been displaced from their homes, according to the United Nations. They're facing a grave danger in terms of famine and threats to life. Women are being violated, and men are also losing their lives.

I want to pick up on my colleague's question and ask about how you are facilitating the resettlement of this second deeply vulnerable population. Please add to what you already said.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** As I said earlier, Canada remains very deeply concerned about the crisis.

I'll just make a couple of points in the time available. At the very onset of the crisis, IRCC immediately prioritized the temporary and permanent resident applications from this group, which were already in our inventory.

To help keep the families together, we facilitated a fee-exempt travel document for these people who were fleeing the conflict. We also waived the fees for biometrics for temporary resident visas or permits for eligible family members.

Since that—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kochhar. I'm very sorry, but your time has ended. You'll have to respond, maybe, in the next round.

[*Translation*]

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

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Deputy Minister, when a study permit is issued to an international student who has already received a Quebec acceptance certificate, which level of government is responsible for ensuring the student undergoes a medical examination and applies for police clearance, for example?

[*English*]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Anyone who is actually coming into the country is subjected to the medical exam as well as to the security—

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Pardon me, but my question is as follows: Which department is responsible for asking for these documents? Is it your department?

[*English*]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** This is my department. This is our department.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay. That was a pretty straightforward question.

That role is therefore outside the mandate of universities and provinces.

That being said, there was a report on this issue recently on the television program *Enquête*. I hope you watched it, even though I understand information is not widely circulated within your department. This was a high profile matter in Quebec, where an international criminal network has been using the study permit system. This was reported in the first episode of this year's *Enquête* program. The program draws a large audience in Quebec. I do understand that sometimes there is a lack of awareness of what goes on in Quebec. In any event, these criminal groups are using the study permit program to bring people into the country. We are talking about close to \$500 million in profits from the proceeds of crime related to romance scams, identity theft, drug-related theft, auto theft and so on. In response, the IRRC's spokesperson shifted blame to universities and the Government of Quebec.

How do you explain this type of response and yet you have just told me that you are responsible for these steps?

• (1615)

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We are responsible for actually following through in terms of monitoring if there are such situations, including the fraud concerning anything where there was—

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** The question is this: What explanation is there for your spokesperson blaming universities and the Government of Quebec, and yet you have just told me that it is your responsibility? How do you explain the fact that your spokesperson gave that response after the program on *Enquête*?

[English]

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** As I was saying, this is something we monitor. We are not the enforcement agency on this one. We share all the information with the CBSA and the RCMP. That is the procedural way to do that.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Kochhar.

Next, we have five minutes for Mr. Redekopp.

**Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the team for being here today.

The minister's briefing binder showed a wait time for some humanitarian and compassionate categories of up to 50 years. I think the website today says that it's greater than 10 years. This includes Hongkongers, Ukrainians, Sudanese and all the other people we invited to our country. Now, the government is effectively saying they will never be processed.

Deputy Minister, do you think it's reasonable for a newcomer to Canada to wait 50 years for their claim to be processed?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I'll start, and if you need more precision, I'll turn to my ADM colleague here.

We have started mentioning, on our website, a forward-looking processing time, which means that if you apply today, it would be the time taken to actually get that visa over time.

**Brad Redekopp:** I understand that. Do you think it's reasonable to have somebody wait 50 years for that to be processed?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I'd comment on one thing: It is dependent on the number of spots available, which is the immigration-level decision. It is not based on—

**Brad Redekopp:** I'll take that as a yes, then, that you do think it's reasonable to wait 50 years for a claim to be processed.

**Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Chair, on a point of order, the deputy minister did not say that. Our colleague's an experienced colleague, but he's putting words into the mouth of the witness.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's debate.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

Mr. Redekopp, your time begins again.

**Brad Redekopp:** Thank you.

I didn't hear a no, so I'm taking that as a yes.

Deputy Minister, have you advised the government to stop accepting United Nations-selected government-sponsored refugees and instead use those levels to keep the promises you made to persecuted persons from Hong Kong, Ukraine and Sudan who are already in Canada?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I'll turn to Jean-Marc.

**Jean-Marc Gionet (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Protection and Family Programs Sector, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** As was discussed earlier in the context of the broader immigration levels planning, we have to find the balance between all the various pathways and commitments that we've made, including for Hong Kong and Sudan but also for the United Nations refugees we accept.

**Brad Redekopp:** Thank you.

What I'm hearing you say, and you can tell me if I'm wrong, is that we're going to continue to bring in people even while we have many, many people in our country right now who are trying to go through the H and C category. We're still going to keep on bringing people in. That's what I'm hearing you say.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That is not how we actually proceed. We do not have any cap, or we don't have intake control over asylum. This is one category in which people are actually coming in and we cannot stop—

**Brad Redekopp:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but these were specific programs. These aren't general asylum claims. These are the Hong Kong programs. These are the Ukraine programs. These were specific programs with known numbers.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That is what we are trying to do. In terms of those numbers that were created so far, Ukraine, for example, was a temporary program. If you are turning toward becoming a permanent resident, you will have to apply through the economic levels, which will take you that many years. There is limited space in the levels plan.

**Brad Redekopp:** Thank you.

Would it be possible to table with the committee, by each stream in the H and C category, how many files have been processed, by quarter, for just the last two years, for 2024 and 2025? That would be very helpful to us. Is that something you can provide?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** To be precise, are you looking for the last two years of data?

**Brad Redekopp:** Yes. I'm looking for the data for the calendar years 2024 and 2025.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We will provide that.

• (1620)

**Brad Redekopp:** Your own rules say that if someone gives immigration advice, they must be a licensed representative. That's correct, right?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** That is correct.

**Brad Redekopp:** Why do you allow colleges or designated learning institutions to use unlicensed agents overseas to steer people into our system?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We don't have any authority to do that overseas. We have authority only in Canada, where only registered consultants give the advice. What happens outside of Canada is not something we can—

**Brad Redekopp:** Do we not have control over the designated learning institutes in Canada? Can we not tell them how to do things?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We absolutely do. We give them very clear guidance on what it means if fraud is detected, what happens as a consequence and what it means. Again, as I mentioned, we don't have control outside of Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kochhar, and thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

We now go to Mr. Peter Fragiskatos for five minutes.

**Peter Fragiskatos:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the officials for being here.

Deputy Minister, I'll allow you to elaborate, as much as you wish, on that answer regarding processing times and levels and the way in which levels, as set in the levels plan, determine wait times. I think that's an important connection to make. I want you to be on the record on that question.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** As is the case every year, we set up a permanent resident levels plan, which divides into the economic category, family reunification and the H and C category. We do dedicate a number to that. It is presented in Parliament. That is how we execute this. Last year the number was 485,000 and we got 483,000. This year the number is 395,000, and that's what we will do.

In that category, we also have a subclassification of how many of those would be under the humanitarian and compassionate category and how many would be protected persons. Based on this, the levels space is allocated to particular vulnerable groups who are in Canada, so Hong Kong, Sudan and any others who want to get into those programs will be allocated that space.

It is a limited space. However, there are people who are in line. If there is an opportunity for us to actually move them quickly, if there is any space in the levels, that's how we will be able to manage that. Barring that, it is first in, first out. That is how we are determining how many people are actually coming to permanent residency in a fixed capacity model.

**Peter Fragiskatos:** Thank you very much.

Speaking of the levels plan, the one for 2025 through to 2027 talks about the 2025 number being at 673,000 plus, as we have heard today. Earlier there was a question about 700,000 or thereabouts, in excess of it. I think there was some back-and-forth. I think the committee needs some clarification on that particular figure.

Deputy Minister, the question goes to you or to Ms. Gill, as you wish.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** I'll respond on that one.

The total new arrivals target for 2025 is 673,650, to be more precise. Out of this we are planning to have 367,750 given to work permits and 350,900 to the student permit. For arrivals until now, which is the end of August, I think, it is 200,500 in the work permit. That is 167,000 people left in the work permit category and only 89,200 in the student permit. Again, that is around 110,000 students left from what is our target.

**Peter Fragiskatos:** Can I go to Ms. Gill then on this confusion or the question that existed on the 700,000 compared to the 600,000 number on temporary residents.

Ms. Gill, you were giving an answer to that question before. I just want to hear it again.

• (1625)

**Pemi Gill:** Of course.

With regard to student and worker new arrivals to Canada, this information is on our website. We are publishing it monthly. It is effective as of the August 31 data on there. What we are showing is that as part of the levels plan for 2025, we have a target or a planned admission of up to 673,650 across new students and new workers arriving in Canada. However, that is not, within the year, the same number of people we have approved, who then get a permit that means they can come to Canada. It's only upon arrival in Canada.

For example, a student might have applied in the months of July or August of this year. We have assessed their application. We've approved it. However, they are not starting school until next year. They will not arrive in Canada until 2026, at which time we will count them against the arrivals target, which is what the target is in the levels plan.

It's important that we keep the numbers for permits issued separate from arrivals—

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm sorry. That's time for five minutes. You can respond in the next....

We have four minutes left in this round. I think I'll give two minutes to each party, if that's okay.

Does that work for everyone?

I said one minute, but I think we could do two minutes.

Mr. Ma, we will start with you for two minutes, please.

**Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Deputy Minister, you mentioned earlier that you modernized the systems and processes to be efficient. Many of the Hong Kong pathway applicants who have inquired with IRCC have confirmed that they have received all the necessary approvals, yet months pass and they are still waiting for the issuance of their PR.

Can you tell us what the holdup is? What's wrong with this process? What are you going to personally do about fixing this problem?

Thank you.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** As we were just mentioning, it is not about the lack of any documents; it is about the levels of space. We have limited levels of space through which we will have to adjust those who have applied through Hong Kong. Just to ensure that they are not being turned back, we are making sure that their work permit is valid, and we are extending them so they can stay here and continue with their life until their turn arrives for permanent residence.

**Michael Ma:** However, many people are waiting for their expired work permits to be renewed. This is impacting their employment status, as well as their children's ability to attend school.

Can you please look into this?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Absolutely, we are prioritizing the work permit extensions. Anyway, our rule is that there is an implied status; if you have applied for an extension and you already hold a work permit, that's an implied status. We can look into that one.

**Michael Ma:** The last point is on the retained status. It is not clear. Most universities and employers don't understand what it means. They are looking for an approved work permit. If you could clarify that or rapidly issue the work permit, that would resolve a lot of misunderstanding.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** We are committed to reducing our processing time, which should come down to the standard service time. We are publishing on our website that implied status means that they have applied and we are still to adjudicate there.

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

Thank you, Mr. Ma.

Ms. Sodhi, you have two minutes.

**Amandeep Sodhi (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you all for being here today.

My first question is for Mr. Kochhar.

Are you able to tell the committee how many approved temporary residents there were in 2024 compared to 2025? Could I have simple numbers, please?

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** Are we looking for work permits?

**Amandeep Sodhi:** It's for temporary residents.

**Harpreet S. Kochhar:** In terms of temporary residents approved during the same time, from January to August, it was five million temporary residents. That is for 2024.

I think what you're probably looking for is information that we have in terms of a comparison from January to August. Let me compare that. There were 5.022 million temporary residents overall. In January to August in 2025, we have 4.389 million temporary residents overall. That's the comparison between the two at the same time period.

• (1630)

**Amandeep Sodhi:** Thank you.

My next question is for IRB.

Can you tell us about the current trends in terms of the decreased number of asylum seekers that Canada has seen arrive this year in comparison to last year and previous years?

**Manon Brassard:** As you know, we don't control intake, and we manage the cases as they arrive with us. I can say that 155,000 and 176,000 were a record intake numbers for the last two years. Looking at trends of claims referred, we're looking at about 100,000. What can create those is world events, conflicts and a multitude of events.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Ms. Brassard.

We now have a final two minutes with Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to the committee, Ms. Brassard.

A number of migrant rights advocacy groups have reached out to the committee recently after Bill C-12 was tabled. If the bill is passed as drafted, the proposed changes will have significant consequences on the way you do things.

I understand that you may not be able to share your opinion on a government bill, but I suppose you have reviewed this document. Can you tell the committee what organizational changes you will need to make if Bill C-12 were passed?

**Manon Brassard:** It is a little early to say because we do not yet have the regulations. Many aspects in the bill refer to regulations.

Nevertheless, we are starting to look at our computer systems and how we can change the systems, obviously. If there are changes pertaining to abandonment, we will need to adapt hearings to the new process under the law. We will also look into how we will organize ourselves if there are changes to how the information in these files is delivered to us.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I do understand that the minister can no longer be called before you.

How do you perceive the withdrawal of this right for some individuals who may have wanted to see the minister or an official testify before you?

**Manon Brassard:** It will be case-specific. The minister can always send a representative if they want to bring forward an issue. The bill will not take away our ability to summon the minister, but we will decide cases based on the evidence in front of us.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

I'm sorry, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. That is your time.

Thank you, Ms. Brassard.

I want to thank all the witnesses for the excellent testimony over the last hour; it's gone by very quickly.

We're now going to suspend for five minutes, so that the current witnesses can leave. We will then invite the witnesses from the second panel to set up.

Thank you.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1635)

**The Chair:** Welcome back.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for the second panel.

From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Aaron McCrorie, vice-president of intelligence and enforcement. From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Mike McGuire, director general of international and border policy. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Richard Baylin, assistant commissioner of federal policing, and Jennifer Gates-Flaherty, director general of Canadian criminal real time identification services.

I extend a warm welcome to all of you.

Each group will have five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

I believe Mr. McGuire will start for the first five minutes. Mr. McGuire, please, go ahead.

**Mike McGuire (Director General, International and Border Policy, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, members of the committee, for inviting us here today.

My name is Mike McGuire. I'm the director general of international and border policy at Public Safety Canada.

[Translation]

I am very pleased to join my public safety colleagues here today to talk about the work we are doing to manage our border and immigration systems in close partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC.

• (1640)

[English]

The administration of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is a shared responsibility between the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Public Safety.

The Minister of Public Safety has specific authorities under the IRPA that are primarily related to serious inadmissibility due to security concerns and the enforcement of the IRPA and border legislation at the border and inland. These specific responsibilities include supporting the immigration security screening process upon the referral of applications from IRCC, enforcing detention and removal orders for individuals who are inadmissible to Canada, and developing policies related to immigration and security.

Specific grounds of inadmissibility for which the Minister of Public Safety is responsible include national security grounds, including engaging in active espionage, subversion, terrorism or violence against Canada, or being a member of an organization that engages in such activities; human or international rights violations, including gross human rights violations, genocide, a war crime or a crime against humanity; organized criminality, including people smuggling, trafficking in persons or laundering of money, or other proceeds of crime; and transborder criminality on entering Canada for prescribed offences.

I'd like to take a moment to expand on the role the Public Safety portfolio plays in keeping bad actors from coming to Canada through its immigration security screening program. With support from the RCMP, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service lead the portfolio's efforts to ensure that individuals entering Canada are subject to appropriate security screening and do not pose a threat to the security of Canada.

Here is how it works. IRCC conducts an initial assessment of all foreign nationals who apply from outside Canada. This initial assessment includes a review of departmental databases and risk indices. Based on the results of this assessment, IRCC identifies applications that warrant further security screening by the Public Safety portfolio. Following a security screening that looks at the inadmissibility criteria I referred to earlier, the CBSA provides a non-binding recommendation to support a final decision by IRCC officers or the Immigration and Refugee Board. The ultimate decision to grant status to a foreign national, including after considering the result of security screening, lies with IRCC.

*[Translation]*

I would now like to take a moment to talk about the link between immigration and the Government of Canada's Border Plan.

The plan provides \$1.3 billion in funding and introduces a suite of concrete measures to further strengthen border security, disrupt the illegal trade in fentanyl and other drugs, and improve operational coordination and information sharing.

Let me highlight some of the major immigration-related outcomes and measures in the plan.

Since July 2024, the number of illegal crossings from Canada to the United States is down by 99% from its June 2024 peak. This is due to tighter visa integrity measures taken by our colleagues at IRCC, improved enforcement along the border, and expanded information sharing between Canada and the United States.

Security at points of entry and exit has also been strengthened through increased surveillance using drones, patrols and helicopters, and the deployment of more resources. This has enabled us to have ongoing surveillance and patrols to detect threats along the border, respond as necessary and investigate the threats.

*[English]*

More resources have been assigned to enforce removals of inadmissible individuals from Canada. Last fiscal year, more than 18,000 removals were enforced, the most in over a decade.

Finally, as you are aware, Bill C-12 proposes several new measures to enhance the integrity of the immigration system.

Public Safety Canada continues to play a strategic role in border management, focusing on policy leadership and coordination, in close collaboration with portfolio partners and IRCC.

*[Translation]*

I will now hand over to my colleagues for a more detailed explanation of the role their agencies play in the day-to-day application of the ministerial powers of the Minister of Public Safety under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Thank you.

*[English]*

**The Chair:** That was perfect timing, Mr. McGuire, thank you.

Now I'm going to turn to the Canada Border Services Agency and Mr. McCrorie, vice-president, intelligence and enforcement, for five minutes.

**Aaron McCrorie (Vice-President, Intelligence and Enforcement, Canada Border Services Agency):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon.

I'm Aaron McCrorie, the vice-president of intelligence and enforcement at the Canada Border Services Agency. It is a pleasure to be here today with my colleagues from Public Safety and the RCMP.

The CBSA's work contributes to many of the objectives of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA. These include protecting public safety by denying access to Canada for criminals or security risks while facilitating the entry of legitimate travellers. In doing so, we maximize the benefits of immigration, strengthen the multicultural fabric of Canada and protect public safety.

To help maintain the integrity of our immigration system and keep Canada safe and secure, the CBSA exercises its mandate prior to the border, at the border, at official ports of entry and after the border.

Prior to arrival, as noted by my colleague from Public Safety, the CBSA works with IRCC and CSIS to screen visa applicants and all refugee claimants. When we identify those who are inadmissible due to serious concerns such as criminality, complicity in war crimes, crimes against humanity and national security issues, we provide a non-favourable recommendation to IRCC, which is the decision-maker. So far this fiscal year, we have closed over 37,465 cases, with 394 non-favourable recommendations.

In addition, our national targeting centre assesses all air travellers coming to Canada for security threats, or travellers who may be inadmissible. So far this calendar year, the national targeting centre, working with our network of international liaison officers, helped stop 2,480 inadmissible individuals from coming to Canada. So far in 2025, about 64 million travellers have arrived at Canada's ports of entry, where CBSA facilitates the flow of legitimate travellers, grants temporary resident status, supports acquisition of permanent resident status and processes claims for refugee protection.

Our border services officers also identify those who may be inadmissible and either allow them to leave or prepare an inadmissibility report. To date, 5,512 individuals have been reported at ports of entry as being inadmissible.

Inland, or after the border, the CBSA conducts criminal investigations and immigration investigations. The agency employs over 200 criminal investigators whose mandate includes investigations into those organizing or facilitating immigration fraud, those unlawfully acting as consultants, and those suspected of offences with respect to illegal employment of foreign nationals. As an example, in 2024, an Indian national was convicted by the courts and sentenced to three years in prison following a CBSA investigation into allegations of counselling misrepresentation, making false statements and giving advice without being a licensed consultant in relation to a large number of foreign students.

As a second example, following a CBSA joint investigation with the OPP in April 2025, three Ontario businesses were convicted and fined a combined total of \$450,000 for having employed a large number of foreign nationals without authorization.

The agency also employs approximately 550 personnel dedicated to immigration investigations and removals. Their work includes investigating allegations of inadmissibility and overstays and enforcing compliance with IRPA, including the removal of those who are inadmissible. Under our immigration laws, inadmissible persons who are the subject of an enforceable removal order are required to leave Canada immediately. The removal of foreign nationals found admissible upholds and protects the integrity and fairness of Canada's immigration system. It is also one of the most effective ways to deter others who might seek to abuse the system.

It's also important for me to note that there are multiple steps built into the removals process to ensure procedural fairness. We action removal orders only once all legal avenues of recourse that constitute a stay of removal have been exhausted.

Last fiscal year, the CBSA removed more than 18,000 inadmissible individuals, the most in a decade. Canada's border plan provided CBSA funding to increase the rate at which it removes inadmissible individuals. The goal is to enforce 20,000 removals for each of the next two fiscal years.

Finally, we also manage a detention program that is critical to supporting our removals program. Detention is always a measure of last resort. We currently have 156 detainees in our four facilities, while there are 14,227 individuals in alternatives to detention. However, for those who are public safety or flight risks, detention is necessary.

Canada reaps important social and economic benefits from immigration. The CBSA helps Canada to realize those benefits through enforcement of IRPA, which helps to ensure the integrity of the system and helps to protect Canadians.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. McCrorie. You spoke very quickly. Our interpreters did a great job, so thanks to them.

Lastly, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have assistant commissioner of federal policing, Richard Baylin.

**Richard Baylin (Assistant Commissioner, Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Thank you.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and honourable members.

I would first like to acknowledge that I am speaking today on the traditional and unceded lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before this committee to talk about the RCMP's involvement in supporting citizenship and immigration and the management of the Canada-U.S. border.

My name is Richard Baylin. I am the assistant commissioner of the RCMP's federal policing border integrity program. I'm joined by my colleague, Jennifer Gates-Flaherty, director general, Canadian criminal real time identification services.

I will begin by providing some background on the RCMP's responsibility with respect to Canada's borders. The RCMP's duties and authorities related to border security stem from the RCMP Act and regulations, the Customs Act, and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and regulations.

The RCMP is responsible for securing Canada's borders between official ports of entry against inbound and outbound criminal threats in all domains: air, land, marine and Arctic.

To delineate areas of shared responsibility and co-operation on border security, various memoranda of understanding, or MOUs, were established between the RCMP and CBSA. The CBSA-RCMP MOUs detail the divisions of responsibilities and specific areas of co-operation and investigative responsibility related to border enforcement and administration, public safety and support of national security outcomes.

Border integrity is a priority for the RCMP. I can assure members of this committee that we continue to work with our portfolio, law enforcement, and indigenous partners across the country to ensure we are prepared to address any border concerns.

The RCMP also participates in numerous cross-border initiatives with the U.S. that allow for joint operations and investigations. Highly integrated and multimodal cross-border teams investigate criminal threats to the Canada-U.S. border, including irregular migration and human smuggling. These teams allow for shared communications, improved response times to border incursions, and enhanced investigative capacities.

The RCMP is responsible for the stewardship of the national repository of criminal records, which largely consists of information regarding charged Canadians but also includes foreign charges if they're reported by the FBI or Interpol, when they're supported by fingerprints and are equivalent to a federal charge in Canada.

On behalf of IRCC, the RCMP conducts criminal record checks and fingerprint analyses for individuals applying for immigration or refugee status or citizenship. These checks help IRCC assess whether applicants pose a security risk or have a criminal background that could affect their admissibility to Canada.

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the RCMP processed more than three million fingerprint-based criminal record checks in support of IRCC applications. The criminal record check process is largely automated and is completed within minutes of a search request. Search results are returned to IRCC through their global case management system.

In addition, the RCMP sends automated system notifications to IRCC when a subsequent criminal fingerprint submission by a law enforcement agency positively identifies to an immigration record. This allows IRCC and/or CBSA to follow up and investigate as required for enforcement and decision-making.

While CBSA is the primary enforcement body at borders, the RCMP supports the CBSA in investigating human smuggling, human trafficking and organized crime related to immigration, and in enforcing laws in remote border areas where CBSA may not have a presence.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I'd be glad to take your questions.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** That is wonderful, thank you.

Thanks to all of you for keeping your time. I know there are many questions.

We are going to begin with six-minute rounds.

First, we have Mr. Redekopp for six minutes.

**Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I want to first start with CBSA and asylum claimants. When there's an inadmissible asylum claimant, does CBSA intervene in every case, or does it assume that some people with inadmissible claims leave on their own?

**Aaron McCrorie:** If I understand the question, the decision is made by the IRB. We'll intervene at the IRB to make the argument for inadmissibility.

We do expect individuals to comply with the law. The law is that you're supposed to leave the country within 30 days of being given an inadmissibility order. We don't necessarily track each and every individual. We will track some people, and we will intervene. We take a risk-based approach to who we focus our efforts on for removals.

I would also note that the initial IRB decision will often be appealed to the IRB itself. It can be appealed to the Federal Court, and there may be a request for a pre-removal risk assessment.

It would not be an efficient use of our resources to track each and every individual when we get that IRB decision and go through that process. We manage it through our systems.

**Brad Redekopp:** When people have exhausted all of their options, what percentage would you intervene with versus assuming that they left the country?

**Aaron McCrorie:** It's hard for me to give you a percentage. I could talk to you a little about how we have a series of removals inventories where you look at, for example, the number of people who have a removal order, but it's not active because they are going through the process, those who we can't remove because they're subject to an administrative deferral for removals, and then those who we're actively working on the cases for. If you can bear with me, I can give you those numbers.

**Brad Redekopp:** Related to that, do you have an exit tracking method, then? Do you know that somebody has left the country when they're supposed to have left the country, once all options have been exhausted?

• (1655)

**Aaron McCrorie:** Yes, at the CBSA we gather exit information in two different ways. When you go out through the land border, our colleagues at the CBP will provide us information. When you depart by air, we'll get that information from the airlines. The nature of the information will be who you are, your travel document, your date of birth, your mode of travel and that sort of thing.

Unfortunately, the systems aren't designed in a way that allows us to do that analysis that I think you're looking for at a systematic level. We can do it on a case-by-case basis, which is very labour-intensive, but we can't do it at a systematic level.

**Brad Redekopp:** If person A is supposed to have left the country, are you able to guarantee, by looking at the data you mentioned, that he or she really did leave the country?

**Aaron McCrorie:** What we will do as part of, for example, our warrant reviews is active case management. We review a case and look in terms of trying to determine where they are. We'll use that exit information. We'll use other information to determine if they have left. In some instances, we're the ones who will go to the airport with the individual to make sure that they board a plane. In other instances, we will escort them out of the country and take them to their destination.

**Brad Redekopp:** Since the safe third country agreement changes took effect in 2023, how many people crossed from the U.S., waited 14 days or more and then claimed asylum here, making them exempt from being sent back under the agreement?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I think the IRCC would be the holders of that data in that, when they come in and they've spent their 14 days in the country, they're making the application with IRCC rather than with the CBSA. I apologize.

**Brad Redekopp:** All right. How many people have had their application to enter Canada refused for causing excessive demand on health or social services to date in 2025? As you know, that's part of IRPA requirements.

**Aaron McCrorie:** I apologize; I don't have that number readily at hand.

**Brad Redekopp:** How many people did CBSA recommend be denied, only to be overruled by IRCC?

**Aaron McCrorie:** It happens. I couldn't tell you offhand what the number is, say, for this fiscal year. I think I indicated in my remarks that we had about 300 or 400 non-favourable recommendations, but there will be times when there are other considerations. For example, if there's only one person who can come in and fix a piece of machinery, there will be a national interest process that allows that person to come into the country.

**Brad Redekopp:** I see. If you could table that information with the committee, that would be very helpful.

You know that asylum claimants sometimes file bogus refugee claims and, once rejected, appeal these decisions to the refugee protection division. While they are waiting at this stage, you have the authority to enforce removal orders. Do you enforce these orders?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I'm sorry; I'm not sure that I followed the question.

**Brad Redekopp:** When there's a refugee claim and they're waiting for a decision from the refugee protection division, they could be removed from the country.

**Aaron McCrorie:** No, we allow people to go through the due process in terms of making the appeal to the IRB, and often they'll make an appeal to the Federal Court, and then, as I noted, depending on where they come from, they can ask for a pre-removal risk assessment. Those are the steps that we typically go through prior to initiating a removal.

**Brad Redekopp:** How many failed claimants who are linked to document fraud rings, fake offers, ghost consultants and that kind of thing are in the removal queue, and how many were removed in 2024 and 2025?

**Aaron McCrorie:** If I understand the question, I don't have that data readily at hand.

**Brad Redekopp:** Is that something you can table with the committee?

**Aaron McCrorie:** We can certainly see. I can't promise you that we have it, but if we have it, we can certainly provide it.

**Brad Redekopp:** The last Conservative government required CBSA to maintain a list of most-wanted foreign criminals in Canada to be deported. Justin Trudeau, in his soft-on-crime approach, shut this down. With Mark Carney supposedly wanting to get tough on crime again, I presume he has asked CBSA to once again publish this information.

**Aaron McCrorie:** When we look at how we get information about people who may be in the country illegally or who are inadmissible, we look at a variety of tools. When we did our own assessment of that program, it wasn't as effective as, say, tips we got from the public, so—

**Brad Redekopp:** I'm sorry to interrupt you. The idea of a list of most-wanted foreign criminals to be deported is not something that CBSA is currently pursuing.

**Aaron McCrorie:** We're not currently pursuing that, but we are encouraging people to provide us tips and information when they have information about anybody who is here and inadmissible.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Redekopp.

Thank you, Mr. McCrorie.

I think our first up is Mr. Zuberi from the Liberals for six minutes.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Once upon a time, I was a reservist in the Black Watch and served five years in uniform, so I just wanted to salute all in uniform who are working to serve and protect our country.

I am going to start off with a question around security screening.

In our offices, we receive many requests to work on immigration files. On occasion, some are stuck in security screening. Our government has committed to increasing the number of RCMP and CBSA officers by at least 1,000.

Will any of these new resources be dedicated to alleviating the security screening issue? That's number one. Number two is this: What are you doing to reduce these wait times around security screening?

• (1700)

**Aaron McCrorie:** It's premature to say whether any of the 1,000 CBSA frontline officers will be deployed to security screening.

With a program like this, there's a constant tension between the timeliness of our answers and the time we need to take to do it right. We can typically do an easy, simple case in a couple of days; more complex cases may take more time. We're always looking at how we can improve our efficiency without sacrificing that effectiveness piece. If you look over the last couple of years, our productivity has actually gone up quite impressively. The challenge is that our volumes have gone up with it, so we haven't been able to keep up with the increasing volumes.

That doesn't mean we've given up. We're continuing to look at how we can achieve further efficiencies in the program. One thing, for example, is that about 50% of our current inventory of 195,000 are in-Canada asylum seekers, so we're looking at moving away from a first-in, first-out process to finding and identifying the simple, less complex cases so we can get them out of the inventory quicker. That does two things: It gets people decisions quicker, and it also reduces the volume in the inventory and allows our staff to work on the other cases.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you for that.

I understand how you have yet to determine how those new resources will be allocated and where they'll be working.

I want to shift gears and talk about conflict zones. In the first panel, we talked about Sudan, and we talked about Gaza. We have Canadians who have families and loved ones who are going through quite difficult situations, including, in some cases, loss of life, and they want their loved ones to be here.

We appreciate how, in conflict zones, there has to be screening done. Very briefly, I am assuming that everybody is going through robust security screening but that you're also dedicating resources so they're done in a timely fashion.

Is that correct on both fronts?

**Aaron McCrorie:** Absolutely.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Related to conflict, as somebody who's served in the army, I was trained on what war crimes and crimes against humanity are and to not follow orders that are illegal according to international law. That's what we were told as soldiers. I was a soldier; I was a corporal at the end.

Now, Canada and other human rights groups, in particular B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence, have said that war crimes have been committed and crimes against humanity have occurred. The Government of Canada has cautioned and said that the prevention of humanitarian aid from entering Gaza in the past has amounted to a breach of international law.

Are we screening to ensure that those who have served in the IDF during this period in time have not been involved in any of these breaches of international law as they enter Canada? I'm talking about those who are not Canadian citizens.

**Aaron McCrorie:** The way the security screening process works is that our colleagues in IRCC get the applications and, based on the thematic indicators that we've developed with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, they will screen those applicants and then refer them, if warranted, to CBSA and CSIS.

We assess each application on its own merits.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Are you presently satisfied that the safety and security of Canadians is intact, given the level of screening that's happening right now for those who are involved in conflict and are seeking to enter Canada, those who have served with the IDF within the last two years?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I would just respond more generally to say that that is our constant. It's not specific to any conflict zone. That is what our *raison d'être* is and that's what the challenge is in terms of the volumes we're facing and the need for a timely decision. We need to take the time to get that decision right, regardless of where the conflict zone is. That is what we do every day in security screening.

• (1705)

**Sameer Zuberi:** Have there been any applicants to Canada from the IDF in the last two years, who have been refused because of potential war crimes or crimes against humanity they've been involved in?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I don't have that level of detail. I'm not aware of it.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Zuberi.

Thank you, Mr. McCrorie.

We have six minutes from Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming here today.

I will put the same question to representatives of all the organizations, and I hope the answers will be straightforward, such as “Yes” or “No.” I will also take an “I don't know” answer. There is no wrong answer or mistake. I will start with the Canada Border Services Agency.

Mr. McCrorie, can you tell me whether the federal government terminated the contract awarded to Mr. Pierre Guay to lease his land when Roxham Road was closed in 2023?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I can provide a detailed answer, if you will indulge me.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Try and hurry up because I only have six minutes.

**Aaron McCrorie:** Yes, fine.

[*English*]

In the context of what we've seen over the last probably 12 months at Lacolle.... Unlike at other land border crossings, we actually have seen increasing numbers of individuals coming to make asylum claims at Lacolle. Based on a precautionary principle, kind of like when Roxham Road was open, we've started to augment our capacity at Lacolle to handle any significant influx of individuals.

After we went through a very rigorous procurement process, strongly governed within the agency but also working with Public Services and Procurement Canada, an RFP, or request for proposals, was put out. My understanding is that Industry Guay Limited was the winner of that process. This is not my area of expertise, but my understanding is that a contract has been signed and it did go through a rigorous contractual procurement process.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I want to make sure I got that right. The call for tenders was issued when Roxham Road was open. You needed land somewhere for your activities due to the growing influx of migrants. So you issued the request for proposals before Roxham Road was closed.

To my knowledge, the safe third party country agreement between Canada and the United States was renewed when Mr. Biden visited Canada, and then Roxham Road was closed because irregular entries would no longer be allowed. Are we still together?

You have told me that payment to lease this land continued even though Roxham Road was now closed. So according to your logic, a call for tenders was issued because Roxham Road was open and the lease for this land continued after Roxham Road was closed, because you did not know if you would use the land at some point in future.

[English]

**Aaron McCrorie:** I apologize, but I'm only familiar with this most recent contractual arrangement, which, as I say, was a product of the precautionary work we're doing through this winter into the spring from a contingency planning point of view in case we saw a significant increase in numbers at Lacolle.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I find that fascinating.

So the land has not been utilized since Roxham Road was closed in 2023 until quite recently.

[English]

**Aaron McCrorie:** I'm sorry, but I'm not familiar enough with what you're referring to in terms of the land. Again, in anticipation of the significant number of individuals making asylum claims that would overwhelm our existing capacity, I can tell you that we put out an RFP for additional support. My understanding is that this is the organization that got the contract. It's hard for me to talk about what happened prior to that.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** What is the term of these contracts?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I am sorry, but I don't know.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. McGuire, can you answer that question? Do you know whether these contracts have a specific term?

**Mike McGuire:** This contract is not managed by the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, so I don't know.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I suppose I'll get the same answer from you, Mr. Baylin.

[English]

**Richard Baylin:** I do not have an answer to that question.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's great.

That is staggering. Today we have received an official response from the Government of Canada. This is hot off the press, so you may not have had enough time to go through it. The fact is that the government knew, and that the Department of Public Safety and agencies have activities on the land leased through a contract awarded to Pierre Guay. Today, we have been told that these contracts have not been terminated and they will be in force until 2027.

The whole thing seems surreal to me. The federal government appears to have an abysmal communication problem between its various departments and agencies. I am not pointing fingers at anyone when I say that. My main concern here is directed at the federal government.

Today, we are finding out that, by the way, the leases that were signed through contracts awarded to Pierre Guay, a major Liberal Party donor, are still in force, even though Roxham Road was closed. We have also learned that activity on the land resumed recently, but no one can tell me how long these contracts continued to be in force while the land was vacant.

The whole thing just blows my mind. Once again, I am not blaming anyone.

Mr. McGuire, could you tell me whether the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness continues to have activities related to the contracts awarded to Mr. Pierre Guay?

• (1710)

**Mike McGuire:** Again, this contract is not under the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So you don't have any activities connected to this land. Thank you.

Mr. Baylin, does the RCMP have any activities on Mr. Guay's land at the moment?

[English]

**Richard Baylin:** Not that I'm aware of, no.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So we are paying for vacant land.

Thank you very much.

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

[English]

Now we move to our second round, which begins with five-minute rounds.

We will begin with Ms. Rempel Garner for five minutes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'm splitting my time with Mr. Davies.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Just to clarify what my colleague said, you have extended the contract with Mr. Guay due to an anticipated influx of refugees at the Roxham Road crossing. Is that correct?

**Aaron McCrorie:** Not entirely. I'm not 100% sure, so I want to take care here. My understanding is that we put a new RFP out, so it's a new contract that went through appropriate contracting principles and procurement actions in anticipation of.... Look at our numbers at Lacolle. Roxham Road, I described, was the illegal crossing that was taking place between the ports prior to the extension of the STCA. When that ended, people stopped crossing between the ports, at Roxham Road, but we did see people continuing to arrive at the official port of entry, Lacolle. We saw those numbers going up, and with a concern that we might not have enough facilities for a growing number of people, based on the precautionary principle and good solid contingency planning, my understanding is that we've signed a contract.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** How many anticipated crossings do you expect this year that precipitated that RFP?

**Aaron McCrorie:** Through the winter and into the spring, we saw that numbers were comparable—like 300 to 400 people—to what we were seeing during the Roxham Road days. Those numbers have gone down—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Essentially what you're saying right now is that you have seen such a spike in numbers that you had to issue an RFP in anticipation that there would be more people. Would that be correct?

**Aaron McCrorie:** As I say, we operate under the precautionary principle, and it's better to have capacity, if those numbers emerge, than to not have that capacity.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** There's a significant enough threat of that increase happening that you issued that RFP. Is that correct?

**Aaron McCrorie:** Yes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you.

I'll pass the floor to Mr. Davies.

**The Chair:** You have three minutes.

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

I have a number of questions. I hope you'll accept my rapid-fire approach here.

Does a failure to comply with a 30-day order always result in a deportation order?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I think it will depend on the nature of the inadmissibility and the nature of the application, but I'll say by and large yes.

**Fred Davies:** Okay.

Do you have a full list, or can you identify all the people who were on a removal list or a deportation list?

**Aaron McCrorie:** We do maintain removal inventories of various categories. It will include those, for example, whose removal is in abeyance as they move through the asylum process. It will include those who have an enforceable removal order, but because of the country they're coming from, for example, Haiti or Sudan, countries where there's an administrative deferral of removal, we can't send people there. Then we'll have an inventory of people whose removals we're actively working on.

**Fred Davies:** You track that very carefully.

I think you mentioned earlier that you have a target of 20,000 removals per year. That's 20,000 out of how many?

• (1715)

**Aaron McCrorie:** It's 20,000 out of our active.... Bear with me, but I haven't memorized everything.

Bear in mind, the sad analogy I use is that as we remove people, new people are added to our inventories. Right now, for example, our "removal in progress" inventory is sitting at 30,000 people.

**Fred Davies:** I think I have time for one last question.

One of the issues that was raised with me in the past is the idea of sharing information across Canada, among police departments and between IRCC and CBSA. Is there a standard platform you use to share information, or is it just by basic software?

**Aaron McCrorie:** Insofar as IRCC is concerned, we actually operate off a common system, the global case management system. When we work with our partners in the RCMP, that's what CPIC

and the warrant systems are for. A warrant is a signal for us to tell our policing colleagues to look for this person, for example.

**Fred Davies:** Other than CPIC, is there any other platform that would...?

**Aaron McCrorie:** Not with law enforcement, no. It's so dispersed, if you think about all the different police jurisdictions in the country.

**Fred Davies:** I have one last question. Going back to the list of people to be removed from Canada, do you rank the people on that list as high risk, medium risk or low risk?

**Aaron McCrorie:** We have four tiers of priorities. Our tier number one priority is a serious inadmissibility, which would be people with criminality, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Then, we have a bundle around failed refugee claimants and irregular arrivals, again because we want to create a push-away factor. The third tier is everybody else.

**Fred Davies:** I was—

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

I'm sorry, but we've gone past your time.

Thank you so much.

Now we move to five minutes with Ms. Zahid.

**Salma Zahid:** Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses.

I asked this question to immigration, and now I'd like to ask this question to the CBSA officials.

I'm seeing, and I think most of our members of Parliament see, that a lot of the immigration casework is stalled due to the lengthy delays for the security screening. Some cases have been pending for years. This is for all categories. I'm not just talking about refugees or asylum seekers. It's from TRVs to spousal applications.

I agree with the importance of thorough security screening, but the process seems to be a black hole with no accountability or transparency. What can be done to improve this process? What are you doing to improve this?

**Aaron McCrorie:** As I noted earlier, it is a continual challenge in terms of how we manage this program, between the volumes we face and the need for timely decisions. We're very cognizant of the importance of those timely decisions versus the time it takes us to do it right.

As I've said, for a simple, easy case, we can do it in a matter of days. More complex cases are going to take more time. They may be more complex because we're missing information. They may be more complex in terms of where somebody's coming from. It may be because we're waiting for information from partners and we don't have any control over that.

That doesn't mean we don't strive constantly to improve our level of efficiency. I've seen significant improvements in our productivity over the last two to three years, but as I've noted, our volumes have gone up as well. The improvements we've made in productivity have been outstripped by the increase in volume. We had about 50,000 people in our inventory three to four years ago, and we have about 195,000 in our inventory now. What I'd say is that about half of those are in-Canada asylum claimants, so bear in mind that they are here in the country. The other half will be TRV and other visa applicants.

We get a portion of that. The very first step is taking that risk-based approach and allowing IRCC decision-makers, based on our thematic indicators, to make a decision on whether or not security screening is required. If it does come to us, we do need to take the time to do it right.

I apologize if I'm repeating myself, but we are looking at, for those in-Canada asylum claimants, how we can do a better job at more rapidly moving through those cases. We'll probably move from a first-in, first-out process to identifying simple, easy, less complex cases that allow us to clear them out of the inventory more quickly. That's going to do two things. That's going to provide quicker decisions for some people, but then it will free up resources to work on the inventory as a whole and will address some of those visa applications as well.

**Salma Zahid:** Would a deadline for a yes or no for security clearance make any sense? Many people just want an answer either way, so they are not left in limbo. I have seen spousal cases where two or three kids have been born and the spouse has not been able to come to Canada because they are in security clearance.

I see that as particularly very high and long for people coming from certain countries. Are certain countries being targeted?

• (1720)

**Aaron McCrorie:** I wouldn't say any countries are being targeted. We assess each application on its own merits, but there are going to be different challenges in different geographic settings and different state environments in terms of our ability to get information and the timeliness for getting information.

I think you asked me if there should be a deadline. I'd be very concerned if we had that, because we would be operating within a false time frame. Simple, easy cases we can do in a matter of days, but if we have a complex case involving a national security issue, we need to take the time to get it right, so that person does not come to this country.

**Salma Zahid:** For certain files, it is between five and 10 years.

**Aaron McCrorie:** When I look at our inventory, I know we have some that are lengthy, but I don't think we have any that are five to 10 years.

**Salma Zahid:** Would it be possible to get more specific information on where the screening process is right now? All we are told is that it is "in security screening" or it's "in progress". It is very difficult to give that information to constituents again and again.

**Aaron McCrorie:** In the previous panel, the deputy of IRCC referred to a body called the permanent body of senior officials. Those are ADMs from Global Affairs, CBSA, IRCC and CSIS. We

are seized with this issue and we are looking at what we can do to improve transparency. Part of it will be around perhaps better, more accurate service standards and publicizing those. It's also how we can provide more transparency to people.

We don't have an answer yet, but we're seized with the issue, and we're looking at what we can do.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Zahid. That's your time.

Now we go to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I read on the Internet that between 2017 and 2022, contracts with Pierre Guay to lease land alone cost the federal government approximately \$30 million. From what we can tell, I suspect that contract renewal for the 2023 to 2027 period will cost even more.

Today, I put that question to representatives of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and all of them told me that they did not know whether the contracts were still in force.

In contrast, I got a great response from Mr. McCrorie to the effect that in 2025, the land was put back into use for some activities. I thank him for his response.

However, I would like to understand one thing. If you know that you have been using this land as of this year, then you should be familiar with how the land was used during the 2023 to 2025 period covered by the contracts, or from when Roxham Road was closed until your activities resumed recently.

**Aaron McCrorie:** I am sorry.

[*English*]

I don't have that information. I'm not familiar with that.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** To your knowledge, are there comparable contracts in Canada to those the federal government signed with Mr. Guay's company, or are these contracts so unique that they cannot be found anywhere else? Again, there is no wrong answer to this question.

[*English*]

**Aaron McCrorie:** I don't know.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** You know that there are previous contracts with Mr. Guay, but you don't know whether there are other contracts elsewhere in Canada.

In your opinion, is there a possibility that these are one-of-a-kind contracts, with no equivalents anywhere else? If you know that other contracts were issued to Mr. Guay, then you ought to know whether there are others somewhere else. If none exist elsewhere, it means that Mr. Guay is the only one who was issued these contracts.

[English]

**Aaron McCrorie:** I don't think you can reach that conclusion. In my knowledge of all the contracts the CBSA may have across the country.... I don't have that knowledge.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** How would you know about the existence of contracts issued to Mr. Guay and not about contracts issued elsewhere?

[English]

**Aaron McCrorie:** It's because I heard your question, and I got some information so I could answer your question.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay, I understand. So someone sent you a stock answer. Do ask them whether there are contracts in other parts of the country and let me know what they say. I have a feeling that my two and a half minutes are over, but you have time to find that out before my next turn.

Thank you.

[English]

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

Because we only have about six minutes left, I think we're going to do two minutes each, if that's okay.

We are going to start with Mr. Menegakis for two minutes.

**Costas Menegakis:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, all of you, for your service and for being here with us today.

Mr. McCrorie, did you mention that 30,000 people is the number of people removal orders in Canada today?

• (1725)

**Aaron McCrorie:** That's the number in our inventory that we're actively working on.

**Costas Menegakis:** For how many people removal orders does CBSA know exactly the person's location and where they are?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I can give you an example. I apologize as I flip through my papers here....

**Costas Menegakis:** I have only two minutes. Can you give us any—

**Aaron McCrorie:** Okay. We don't track the location of each and every individual.

For example, in the inventory of people who are working through the IRB process, there are 200,000 or 300,000 in that. We don't have the capacity, nor would it make sense for us to track each and every one of them.

**Costas Menegakis:** How many people with removal orders in Canada have been convicted of a crime?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I don't have that number readily at hand. If I look in our inventories, I can tell you the number of people—

**Costas Menegakis:** Could you table that for the committee, please?

**Aaron McCrorie:** Yes.

**Costas Menegakis:** Thank you very much.

What is the total number of individuals currently in CBSA's removal backlog who have been flagged by the RCMP as a national security threat?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I don't think any have been flagged by the RCMP as a national security threat.

Something to bear in mind when we're looking at these inadmissibilities when they're involving criminality or a national security threat, for example, is that these are people who have served their time in prison. That crime and serving of the time has rendered them inadmissible, but it doesn't necessarily mean they're a current, existing threat.

**Costas Menegakis:** Do you have an estimate or can you predict how long CBSA thinks it will take to clear up the removal backlog?

**Aaron McCrorie:** I think just the nature of the business is that as people move through the immigration system, there are always going to be people who are coming in—

**Costas Menegakis:** Of the number there right now, what do you estimate if you—

**Aaron McCrorie:** I wouldn't hazard a guess. Again, our expectation is that people comply with the law and leave voluntarily. If they don't, then we will enforce it.

**Costas Menegakis:** The average length of time it takes to finally remove somebody is how long?

**Aaron McCrorie:** The time really varies. A lot depends on a whole bunch of different circumstances.

A lot depends on whether we have their travel document or they have gone through the entire process of appealing to the IRB and doing Federal Court appeals, or asking for a pre-removal risk assessment, getting the travel documents or making travel arrangements.... It can take some time.

**Costas Menegakis:** We—

Is that it? Okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Menegakis. You're way past two minutes.

We have two minutes now for Ms. Sodhi.

**Amandeep Sodhi:** Perfect. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

My question is for any or all of the witnesses.

In contrast to the Harper government, which laid off over 100 CBSA officers during its time in government, our new government, through Bill C-12, is committed to hiring 1,000 new CBSA officers and 1,000 new RCMP officers and improving information-sharing abilities by IRCC.

Can you tell us how these and other measures introduced in Bill C-12 will improve your agencies' abilities to protect and uphold public safety for Canadians?

**The Chair:** Maybe we'll begin with Mr. Baylin, please, who hasn't had a chance to speak.

Then we'll go to you, Mr. McGuire.

**Richard Baylin:** From a Bill C-12 perspective, there is information sharing relative to the national Sex Offender Information Registration Act. There will be some enhancement of our ability to share information collected there. Some of the thresholds will change. That will be an investigative improvement.

There are amendments relative to the CDSA and things around precursors and law enforcement justification, which give certain immunities for specific drug investigations and an ability to classify precursors more quickly when identified.

There are provisions in there for illicit finance and amendments to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act.

Specifically for the RCMP, those are some key pieces that we're looking forward to seeing.

**The Chair:** Mr. McGuire.

**Mike McGuire:** I would maybe add just one more to that list. There are the amendments to the Oceans Act that Bill C-12 contains. They would provide the Canadian Coast Guard with a security mandate and an ability to conduct security patrols, for example, and to share information intelligence with law enforcement and border enforcement. It will be a really important measure that will add an additional tool to the government's tool kit in terms of securing our borders.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Sodhi. That's it.

The last two minutes go to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I have a question for you, Mr. Baylin. What activities did the RCMP have near Roxham Road when it was open?

• (1730)

[*English*]

**Richard Baylin:** Our operations are multi-faceted. Some of that work is in co-operation with our U.S. partners. It is a matter of patrols, as well as of sensors and cameras, and just patrols reacting to crossings. That is still what we do in a number of different areas across the country.

As it existed then, although the volume was high there, it was also a challenge that we worked through, with our partners at CBSA and IRCC, from a processing perspective. As we would meet and deal with people who were crossing at that time, we would be turning them over to CBSA for processing.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Correct me if I am wrong, but when individuals crossed the border through Roxham Road, they would often be met by the RCMP. These individuals were asylum seekers. Would you take these individuals to designated facilities on Mr. Guay's land?

[*English*]

**Richard Baylin:** I don't have any information in relation to anything to do with the land or what we had associated to it. If we did anything, I don't have anything.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So none of the people here can tell me about the contracts with Mr. Guay. Were these additional facilities where your officers were working to take in asylum seekers and process them expeditiously due to the huge volume? Is there someone here who can tell me why the federal government signed contracts with Mr. Guay?

[*English*]

**Richard Baylin:** As per my previous answer, I don't have any information related to that.

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

Thank you, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

That concludes our second hour of testimony.

I want to say a genuine thanks to all of our witnesses for their testimony. It has been very helpful as we begin our immigration study today.

Colleagues, our next meeting will be this Thursday, October 23. I look forward to seeing you then.

As it is the end of our agenda, I now call this meeting adjourned.







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