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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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**Tuesday, March 6, 2012**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Tilson**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Tuesday, March 6, 2012

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)):** Good afternoon. This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, meeting number 25, Tuesday, March 6, 2012.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study on “Standing on Guard for Thee: Ensuring that Canada’s Immigration System is Secure”.

We have two witnesses for the first hour. One witness is speaking to us from Toronto. I’m going to try pronouncing your name and I hope it is correct.

We have Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam. Is that close?

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam (As an Individual):** Yes, it’s very close.

**The Chair:** That’s all we can do.

We have, all the way from London, England, John Amble.

Can you hear me, sir?

**Mr. John Amble (As an Individual):** I can.

**The Chair:** What time is it over there?

**Mr. John Amble:** It’s 8:30.

**The Chair:** At night?

**Mr. John Amble:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you for appearing at such a strange hour. We appreciate that.

**Mr. John Amble:** I’m happy to do it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Amble is a Ph.D candidate at King’s College London, where he studies regional violent Islamist groups and is the managing director of Global Torchlight, LLC, a political and security risk consultancy. He has also served as an intelligence officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency as part of the U.S. military’s chief counter-terrorism intelligence task force. His extensive military training includes resident professional courses at the U.S. Army Intelligence Centre and the JFK Special Warfare Center. Mr. Amble’s previous research is examining patterns of radicalization and homegrown terrorism in North America and Europe.

Thank you very much to both of you for appearing before our immigration committee. We’re going to ask each of you to speak to the committee for up to ten minutes each.

Mr. Amble, we will proceed with you first. You have the floor, sir.

**Mr. John Amble:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, honourable members, it’s a privilege for me to speak to you today, and I thank you for the invitation to participate in these important hearings.

The value of considering the place of Canada’s immigration system and laws within a broader national security context is immense. My comments will focus on only one piece of this process, namely, radicalization and the threat of terrorism. But it is an important piece and I hope I can contribute to your efforts. The topic of homegrown terrorism is broad and I will do my best to focus my comments on those aspects that are relevant to this committee’s undertaking.

My testimony is based on research I conducted on the recent experiences with homegrown terrorism of three European countries: the United Kingdom, Germany, and Denmark. I identified a few of the dominant characteristics of each country’s experiences and applied them to a study of conditions in the United States to make an assessment of how such a threat is likely to evolve in the U.S.

While I did not directly examine Canada, I believe that similar immigration patterns, and perhaps more important, the very similar cultural patterns of the U.S. and Canada will make my research useful for this committee. Certainly I found several characteristics that are instructive for any country seeking to craft policy that minimizes the risks of radicalization among immigrant communities and, ultimately, the risk of terrorism that arises therefrom.

In looking at the U.K., I reached three key conclusions. First, ineffective crafting and lax enforcement of certain immigration policies and border controls have had a direct impact on the threat of homegrown terrorism. Secondly, there is a discernible geographic component to immigrant radicalization patterns and terrorist activity in the U.K., with a statistical over-representation of ties to certain countries in both categories. Finally, radicalization in the U.K. is principally driven by group dynamics.

In Germany, I found that radicalization tends to revolve around several large, high-profile mosques, and that jihadists in Germany have developed strong ties to a particular group, the Islamic Jihad Union, which is active in Pakistan and also historically in Central Asia and has also been linked to plots to conduct attacks in Germany.

In Denmark, I found that so-called basement mosques have developed as incubators of radicalization, particularly among certain immigrant groups, and that a distinct failure to effectively facilitate integration of immigrants into Danish society is a major contributor to the spread of the jihadist ideology.

Now, what are the salient lessons for Canada? In applying immigration laws and border enforcement to strengthen national security, the U.K.'s history is particularly noteworthy. According to one security expert from Harvard University, the U.K. is "known to take an extremely soft line toward the Islamic terrorists operating on its soil; indeed on occasion its levels of tolerance border on masochism".

Central to such charges is the so-called covenant of security, an alleged tacit agreement under which British authorities would give Islamist radicals a great degree of tolerance as long as the Muslim community's self-policing would guarantee the British state and its people a sense of security from jihadist violence. As the past several years have shown, such an approach has failed to keep the U.K. homeland secure.

In addition to being granted this great degree of freedom, key figures in the jihadist milieu in the U.K. benefited from the lack of enforcement of immigration and asylum laws. For instance, a man convicted in connection with a 2003 plot to use poison to target the London Underground was found to have been in the country illegally. The convicted man was an Algerian immigrant who had been refused asylum but had stayed in the country nonetheless.

An investigation revealed that only one in ten Algerians who were refused asylum actually left the country. Recognizing the danger of this fact, a former MI5 director general argued in 2007 that "We have realised that the free movement of people is a great concept—but if you have people who would kill you, there have got to be a lot more checks. It is sad that the ideals at the end of the Cold War turned out not to be possible."

Even with appropriate immigration policies and adequate enforcement, another difficulty arises when immigrant groups are not integrated into host societies, an issue Denmark has struggled with. The failure to integrate into Danish society has made immigrants of particular ethnic descent, according to one researcher I spoke to, among the most stigmatized minority groups in Denmark. This stigmatization, the integration failures that both produce and compound it, and the community isolation that results from it are all critically important to understanding the recent phenomenon of radicalization from within particular immigrant communities in Denmark.

Any discussion that appears to link the threat of radicalization and homegrown terrorism to a particular ethnic immigrant group is bound to be controversial. Indeed, I do not intend to argue that particular ethnic or national groups are inevitably more vulnerable to radicalization than others. But important questions can be asked that can help determine whether effective immigration policy can support the process of immigrant integration.

• (1535)

Why, for instance, are members of the largest segment of the U.K.'s Muslim minority population, the South Asian community, statistically over-represented in cases of homegrown terrorism, while in Hamburg, a city at the centre of Germany's jihadist environment, only 5% of terrorism suspects are of Turkish origin, which is the country's largest Muslim population?

One important factor in such a discussion is the way in which immigrant communities organize once they arrive in a new host country. Both the U.S. and Canada have a much stronger sense of civil society than most European countries, and this certainly goes a long way in mitigating against patterns of radicalization. But when immigrants who come to North America move directly into areas characterized by their ethnic isolation, this important impact of a strong civil society is muted. Here too is an instructive lesson from the United Kingdom.

A 2005 report by the Royal Geographical Society found an increasing level of isolation of immigrants to the U.K. from parts of South Asia in polarized enclaves. Such enclaves can become incubators for radical and dangerous ideologies. In North America, the Somali diaspora community has emerged as one that organizes similarly, settling primarily in a few cities, with an estimated 25,000 ethnic Somalis residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota, alone.

It was from Minneapolis that at least 20 young Somalis, who had spent most if not all of their lives in the U.S., chose to leave their adopted country behind and travel to Somalia to join the al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab. Similar Somali population centres exist throughout North America, including in Toronto, where the majority of Canada's Somali population resides.

Finally, the unique conditions present in each of the countries I examined led to the emergence of specific hubs of radicalization and radical activity, particularly among immigrant communities. In the U.K. and Germany, large mosques have emerged as such hubs. This is a reflection of the sheer number of jihadists in these countries. But the comparably small universe of jihadists in North America and the fact that there is no equivalent on the North American side of the Atlantic to the skyline of Hamburg, dotted with the silhouettes of 60 to 70 mosques, means that this emergence of high-profile large mosques as bastions of jihadist ideology is unlikely to be replicated here. Instead, Canada and the U.S. are more likely to see similarities with Denmark, where one other defining feature of radicalization is important to note: namely, the emergence of what have been called basement mosques.

These study and worship groups, convened in private, divert potential jihadists out of the mainstream mosque-based Muslim society and into environments where ideologues can influence the thinking of attendees with carefully selected religious texts, a distorted perspective on world events, and stories of adventure, piety, and heroism from jihadist battlefields around the world. Such facilities may be particularly attractive to newly arrived immigrants, both legal and illegal, who seek a comfortable set of surroundings in a new and unfamiliar country.

One area of growing concern to Danish authorities is the existence of these basement mosques in the Somali community. Observers note that in an already isolated ethnic community, these underground meeting places may not even be open to other Somalis. In North America, such isolated basement mosques may not need to emerge for a similar dynamic to take place, as many of the existing mosques, including those that cater primarily to particular immigrant communities, are already surprisingly nondescript. The Abubakar As-Saddique Islamic Center in Minneapolis, for example, where several local youth were alleged to have been radicalized, is a plain brick building that is nearly indistinguishable from the apartment blocks that surround it.

With these lessons from Europe in mind, I would suggest three broad priorities to consider when crafting a policy to ensure that Canada's immigration and border control mechanisms support the country's fundamental national security objectives.

First, effective laws that are adequately enforced should ensure that those not granted the right to stay in the country do in fact leave, particularly if the grounds for such refusal are related to national security concerns.

Second, such laws should facilitate maximum awareness of not only who is entering the country, but also, critically, who is travelling between Canada and those regions of the world with which terrorism dangers are most closely associated.

Finally, terrorism is perhaps the best example of a security issue that thrives when barriers exist between various agencies with very different mandates. The risk of radicalization among immigrant groups highlights this fact. As such, immigration and border control policies should form a mutually supportive relationship with the work of law enforcement agencies at all levels to provide the maximum degree of security against threats of homegrown terrorism.

Complete foresight regarding radicalization and the threat of homegrown terrorism is unfortunately impossible, but seeking an understanding of each is important and can serve to support the critical task of crafting policy that protects both the Canadian people and the fundamental values on which free societies rest. In doing so we should learn from the experiences of other countries, including those that I have just briefly discussed.

● (1540)

With that, Mr. Chair, I will end my remarks. I thank you again for the privilege of appearing before this committee. I will be happy to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** Mr. Amble, thank you for your presentation and your recommendations to the committee. I'm sure there will be some questions from members.

We're first going to hear from another witness, Ms. Rajaratnam, from Toronto.

You have the floor, Ms. Rajaratnam.

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Thank you.

My name is Renuka Rajaratnam. First, let me thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak out.

I'm a proud Canadian and have been living in Canada for over 25 years. Last year, in 2011, I was celebrating my 25th wedding anniversary, on September 17, 2011. I thought this was an event I would celebrate with my family here in Toronto and in Sri Lanka. We are a family of eight, my siblings, with five of us living here in Toronto and three living in Sri Lanka. My two oldest brothers and my youngest sister are the people who live in Sri Lanka. In order to process the celebration, along with my husband I sponsored my three siblings for visitors' visas through my lawyer. All three applied at the same time, with all relevant documents.

My two older siblings were granted visas to come to Canada to attend the function, but not my younger sister. I was so disappointed with the decision of the Sri Lanka High Commission, and I just couldn't come to understand why two members of the same family were given the opportunity to attend, while one person was left behind. This is a reunion I have waited for for 34 years, and it was shattered due to a decision made by the Sri Lanka High Commission, and to date I don't know the reason. They haven't given me the reason for turning down my sister.

My sister did produce all the relevant documents and she had a return ticket, and I vouched through my lawyer for her departure date. She was leaving behind her husband, two young daughters, and her employment in a leading law firm in Sri Lanka. With all these reasons I've given, she was still turned down.

I just want to say here that I had sent out invitations to permanent residents as well as for visitors' visas for numerous friends and family. None of them have violated so far any of the stipulations given by the government. This rejection was very disappointing, and it really took a big toll on our family. I just need reasons for why the Sri Lanka High Commission did this to us. The emotional stress was more than the expenses we incurred. I have produced all the documents that incurred the expenses.

I just want to find out the details, find out the reason for the future, if the commission can come up with the reason why she was turned down. Here's a lady, my younger sister, who travels widely. Why is she not allowed to come to Canada when the rest of her family members are living here? It's just for a visitor's visa. If I could have one good reason, I would accept it. It would really give closure to this whole thing. I would not have to pursue it any more and go through the emotional trauma. I'm looking forward to hearing from the commission, if you could come up with the reasons and find a resolution to this.

That's all I've got to say. Thank you very much again for giving me this opportunity to present my side of the story.

Thank you.

● (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Rajaratnam. The committee will have questions.

I want to draw to members' attention to the fact that the clock in here is wrong. We will be going by the chairman's clock. The chairman's clock is 3:48.

We first have Mr. Opitz.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Amble, thank you very much for your presentation. It was very detailed. I did read your biography, and you're quite accomplished, given what you've done in your past with the U.S. military, the intelligence, and the military training you have.

Sir, my first question to you is on situational awareness in terms of security, and who is coming into this country. In broad terms, first of all, how would you recommend that Canada improve its situational awareness about people coming and going into this country?

**Mr. John Amble:** Thank you very much for your comments.

I guess to begin I should qualify my response by saying that I'm not an expert on Canadian immigration and border control law. However, the research that I did in these three European countries led to one very clear conclusion—and that's in the U.K.: that not only were immigration laws inadequately crafted, but more importantly, they were inadequately enforced. There were simply too many cracks, in terms of not only getting into the country, but then also of people staying in the country. Part of that is also just a matter of scale.

The vast majority of the homegrown terrorism cases in the U.K. have ties to Pakistan. More than three-quarters had individuals who had trained in Pakistan, which is significant and unique to the U.K.

U.K. residents make 400,000 trips to Pakistan per year. The average duration of each one of those is 41 days, which, quite frankly, is enough time to receive dangerous training in a training camp. And yet that duration alone isn't sufficient to be able to determine the actual reasons people are travelling to Pakistan.

I think there needs to be a broad and detailed process to develop a means of tracking people, finding out when people are leaving, when they're coming back, how long they're going for, and what they're doing. They have to eliminate some of the cracks that are certainly present in the U.K.

•(1550)

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** On that attack, we are developing an electronic travel authorization, ETA, and its entry and exit provisions in the perimeter agreement to prevent foreign criminals from abusing what we consider to be our generous immigration system.

As you may be aware, with electronic travel authorization the government will be able to know every single time somebody enters or exits between Canada and the U.S., even at a land crossing. In your opinion, do you think this will help the government crack down on residency fraud and people wanting Canadian status without living here or paying into the system?

**Mr. John Amble:** Absolutely, I do.

One of the problems that all of the European countries have in terms of a terrorism threat—and that's really what my research was limited to—is the Shengen visa programs, the free border crossings within European countries, which means that once an individual enters Europe or any one of the Shengen countries, they can travel across borders without really being tracked in any meaningful way whatsoever.

I've done it myself, crossed many borders, and from the time I left London until the time I came back to London I may have visited five, six, or seven countries, and nobody ever knows those things.

Certainly I think that sort of electronic mechanism will be helpful.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** What do you think of adding biometrics to that? Do you think that adding that dimension would also be an effective tool to prevent fraud and keep security threats out of the country?

**Mr. John Amble:** I certainly do. Outside of my research, as the chair indicated, I was a member of the U.S. army. I served both in Iraq and Afghanistan. We used biometrics in those places with great effect in terms of keeping track of individuals we needed to be keeping track of. I know the United Kingdom has incorporated something similar, a biometrics procedure, in order to enter the country.

However, I know that there have also been significant problems. I can't speak to those in very much detail, but I know that they have had some problems implementing it and determining who they're going to be scanning when they come into the country, and who still needs to go to speak one-on-one with a border official.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** I understand that implementing any new technology is often problematic, especially at the front end where you have to work out the bugs. But is there any data right now that has demonstrated the effectiveness of biometrics?

**Mr. John Amble:** I haven't seen any in the U.K. I think it is too early in the process for them to generate any meaningful data. I do know there's been a bit of controversy, because it's actually created some fairly long lines at Heathrow Airport, which is known for its long lines anyway. I know that, to this point, the government is still planning on sticking with it, confident that ultimately they'll work out some of the kinks in the process and that it will add that element of security they're looking for.

•(1555)

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Would there be any recommendations you would make to Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Canada Border Services Agency that would help mitigate the risks overall on a global scale?

**Mr. John Amble:** Yes, there would. I guess that would be, broadly speaking, understanding the threats—again I'm speaking specifically of terrorism—and understanding that the binary distinction between homegrown terrorism and terrorism that originates abroad is flawed. Many of the cases I've looked at in the U.S. with homegrown terrorists have included individuals who have travelled to Pakistan, Somalia, and some other dangerous parts of the world, so it's also understanding that your immigration procedures and your border control procedures need to be linked with the efforts of local law enforcement and law enforcement up to the national level in order to truly be fully effective in fulfilling national security objectives.

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

Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to be directing my questions to Renuka mostly.

Renuka, I'm happy you're able to join us today. Just so you know, visa screenings are a very important component of the study we're doing in this committee. We've heard a lot of testimony so far about the need for security to prevent people from entering Canada. But as you described with your example of your situation, there must be flaws with the visa screening process if families are being prevented from coming together and families are being prevented from reuniting even for a short period of time. I really do appreciate the time you took out of your day to add your perspective to this topic we're discussing today, or the study.

You have gone through the experience yourself numerous times when, as you've said, you've sponsored people for permanent and temporary visas and had different experiences, different results—just with your one example even where your two siblings were permitted and then your other sister wasn't—so I think it's important for us to hear your story. So thank you again.

We've heard testimonies from officials saying that visa officers have on average about five minutes to consider each application they get in front of them. I'm curious to hear your comments and opinions about this in light of your denial experience and the fact that you have no option for an appeal and you really are not given a real reason as to why your sister was rejected when your other two siblings were accepted.

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Correct. I understand what's happening—

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Ms. Rajaratnam. Please just wait one second.

Point of order, Mr. Weston.

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I'm aware of the very high level of importance this has for the Rajaratnam family and potentially for our committee as well. But I ask this question to my colleagues and to you, Mr. Chair. Are there any boundaries around what we are able to discuss in this committee, which are basically personal applications, appeals, or requests for reconsideration? I ask that just because I think we should be guided for the future in terms of who we request to come before us and what kinds of questions we ask. Again, it's no reflection at all on Ms. Rajaratnam; I just want to make sure we know our boundaries here.

**The Chair:** We actually discussed this at the last meeting, Mr. Weston. I just draw to your attention that the terms of reference that the committee is studying for the security of Canada's immigration system—and I can show it to you—includes the topic of visas. So the questions and the answers are in order.

Okay, I'll start the clock.

Do you have any idea what the question was? Do you want her to repeat it? Do you hear me?

I'll give you lots of time; you'd better ask her again.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Rajaratnam, we've had officials come into our committee and say that visa officers have approximately five minutes to make their decision concerning the applications that come across their desk. I'm curious; could you add your comments and opinions, in light of your

recent experience with your sister and the denial—that there's no option for appeal and that no real reasons are given in the rejection letter?

• (1600)

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Yes. I just want to enlighten you here on the way the process takes place back in Sri Lanka. They have outsourced this whole process, so there are two individuals who just go through the documents when they're presented through a window. You get the impression that they just look at you. I do not think they go through the history of any of the files or they do not screen people properly. It's just that they give the impression of looking at their parents. I am not sure exactly how it happens, but when it's been outsourced, I really wonder whether they are screening these applicants.

I was disappointed when my mother passed away in 2007. I wanted to bring her down. She was flatly denied a re-entry visa. Then at that point, I decided to go through a lawyer, thinking I was going to do it through proper channels. It gives you this impression—whether we should do things in the proper channels, or if you should go and take a different route whether people can come through. It's kind of like giving you that disappointment if you take the wrong route, because all along I have sponsored people on visitors' visas and on permanent residency, and it has always been.... At this point, it makes me look at things negatively.

I really want to know the reason for how things are being processed at each end.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

You're right. I think a good reason is important.

This time around, you used a lawyer, who is a legal expert and should know the requirements of visitor, temporary resident visa applications. What types of supporting documents did your sister include in her application? How much time or money did you guys spend on this process of trying to get her to come for your anniversary?

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Initial fees from the high commission came close to \$200, and then the appeal cost another \$200—and these are non-refundable amounts. Then for the ticket, that cost closer to \$2,000, which was only refunded after giving the letter of rejection from the high commission, and they were refunded half of that.

Add to that, the way the whole process took place. They wanted the documents at the first appearance. Those were my documents, the sponsoring letter given through the lawyer, and her employer's letter, her deeds saying that she has all the links to the country, her children, and her husband's employment, and the houses' titles are in her name. All these documents, her holdings were binding her to Sri Lanka. All these documents were provided, you understand. None of those were taken into consideration, I find.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** She provided deeds to the two properties she owns, you said. You also mentioned that her children were staying behind, back in Sri Lanka, and her husband was staying behind. She was gainfully employed in the country, yet was rejected because the thought was that she wasn't going to go back after the visit. She had booked a return ticket as well?

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Absolutely. She had a return ticket. At the time of booking the tickets, you always have to have it. It's very important and it's compulsory to have the return ticket. So we followed the whole process.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

Renuka, I have about one minute left. When was the last time that you saw your sister, and when was the last time that your whole family was together?

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Thirty-four years ago.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thirty-four years was the last time your family was together, and this was the opportunity for your family to come together to celebrate your wedding anniversary?

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Definitely.

• (1605)

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

I've run out of time, unfortunately.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Byrne, on behalf of the committee, welcome.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** What a pleasure to be here, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Amble, no doubt you heard the testimony of Madam Rajaratnam, a personal narrative of a circumstance that is obviously very upsetting. Perhaps we could circle this a little, if you, Mr. Amble, could provide us some perspective on your thoughts and opinions.

In terms of radicalization, in terms of the creation of an environment of disaffection, is it important, based on your own studies, that jurisdictions achieve balance but also transparency and fairness within their application of the immigration processes, particularly visas? If there is a perception of inconsistency or unfairness, does this contribute to a sense of disaffection that could lead to or be the seed or precursor of radicalization?

**Mr. John Amble:** The short answer is yes.

You're exactly right that there has to be a balance between security and transparency and all the fundamental principles free societies are based on. The difficulty arises in that.... I mentioned in the U.K., for instance, there's an over-representation of ties to Pakistan in virtually every way with respect to their homegrown terrorism threats. That's unique.

That's not the case in many other countries. I mentioned that the largest Muslim population in Germany is of Turkish origin. Yet a study done by the Hamburg state security services showed that among all the terrorism suspects they had arrested and were monitoring or had cases open against, what have you, there included ethnic backgrounds ranging from Balkan countries across the Middle East to Indonesia, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa. It's incredibly diverse.

You've seen the same thing in the United States, where, between 2001 and 2009, 125 people suspected of jihad-related activity were identified in homegrown terrorism cases. Of that group, there were

32 Arabs, 24 African-Americans, 24 individuals of South Asian descent, 20 Somalis, and 20 Caucasian converts. It's almost integrated, so because of that there has to be a level of transparency involved in the process.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne:** Thank you very much for those perspectives.

I want to move, Mr. Amble, to your perceptions of interjurisdictional cooperation in terms of assessing and improving or rejecting applications for visas. Canada and the U.S. have some of the most integrated and shared values and processes to assist in national security. Yet Canada does not currently value or use the provisions for U.S. visitors' visas, particularly tourism visas, in our processes. Quite often visitors from other countries, as you stated earlier, will visit more than one country in any particular travel period.

Is there room to extend greater cooperation between jurisdictions, in particular Canada and the U.S., in the assessment and processing of Canadian visa applications?

**Mr. John Amble:** Certainly I think so. Again, I'll qualify this statement as well and tell you that I'm not an expert on border enforcement in either the U.S. or Canada. But by virtue of the strong links between the two sides and between the two countries, I think it only makes sense to foster those sorts of ties that facilitate the free flow of people but the free flow of people that is understood by both governments.

• (1610)

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

Mr. Menegakis.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank both of our witnesses for your presentations here today.

Before I start my question, I think it's important that our witnesses know that what we're studying here as a committee at this point in time is security. More specifically, our orders of the day here are that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our study is called "Standing on Guard for Thee: Ensuring that Canada's Immigration System is Secure".

We're trying to gather as much information as we can. We want to get your views on the security of our immigration system and perhaps hear your suggestions as to what you think we should be doing to strengthen it and make it better.

I have a question for you, Mr. Amble. At Global Torchlight, you provide your clients with analysis of critical trends and developments in the global political and security environments that impact directly on their overseas business and investment decisions. What types of trends have you identified that might implicate Canada's security and the integrity of our immigration system?

**Mr. John Amble:** I mentioned three broad principles that I think should inform any truly effective and secure immigration policy. One of them is that the law should facilitate maximum awareness of not only who is entering the country, but, and this is critical, of who is travelling between Canada and those regions of the world with which terrorism dangers, as I said, are most closely associated.



As I mentioned, there is a huge and growing amount of travel between the U.K. and Pakistan, which has been tied to some significant security issues for the U.K. Something similar should at least be on the radar of both the U.S. and Canada with respect to militants from Canada and from the U.S.—not necessarily new immigrants, some of these are even second-generation Americans or Canadians—travelling back to Somalia, equipped with a U.S. passport or a Canadian passport, to earn some credible experience in a very real battlefield in Somalia. The danger is that they could return.

The second thing the immigration laws have to support is an awareness of not just who is coming to the country but of who is leaving the country, and when are they coming back? I think there is probably some considerable room for improvement, not just for Canada but for all countries that are perhaps targets for terrorist groups.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you, Mr. Amble.

Again, I'm directing my question to you. In our last committee meeting, one of our witnesses talked about organized illegal immigration into Canada. He used the example of illegal immigrants first going to Latin America, using fake passports, and then moving into the United States and then sometimes on to Canada. How can we stop such organized criminal immigration rings from occurring in Canada?

**Mr. John Amble:** It's an excellent question.

There certainly are examples of individuals moving from various countries in the world to Latin America. There has been considerable attention paid to the threat of terrorist groups exploiting the U.S.'s relatively porous southern border. But I think it's important to keep in mind that as porous as that border is, and as much as it is the source of the majority of illegal immigration into the U.S., the northern border is much longer and is watched over with considerably less manpower and resources, both on the Canadian side and on the American side. That means that as easy as it is for individuals to come illegally into the U.S. across the Mexican border, it's perhaps easier for them to cross the Canadian border.

• (1615)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Let me ask you this, then. What recommendations would you make to the government to strike the right balance between the security of Canadians and Canadian values and the flow of visitors and genuine refugees coming to Canada? More specifically, what about some recommendations that strike the right balance in terms of the security of Canadians and their civil liberties?

You heard from my colleague about the issue of biometrics and sharing information with other countries. Some people might suggest there's a security or a privacy issue there. I don't share that opinion. I think we need to protect our borders as much as possible.

Can you share your thoughts on that?

**Mr. John Amble:** Yes, I can.

Fundamentally, what it comes down to is providing an accessible means of legally crossing the border. As long as that can be done, the appeal of crossing the border illegally will be dramatically diminished. Doing so by incorporating, let's say, metric scans or

other security measures but doing that in ways that aren't deemed to be too intrusive will, as I said, encourage such legal border crossings.

To be honest, I've flown across Canada many times. I grew up in northern Minnesota and spent quite a bit of time in Winnipeg and crossed the border many times. Frankly, there's no reason that this information, when I cross the border, can't and shouldn't be available to both my government, the U.S. government, and yours.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** I'd like to make my last point to Ms. Rajaratnam.

Ms. Rajaratnam, I understand your plight, the situation. I feel for you and your family. I don't want you to misconstrue my questions as being disrespectful to you in any way, shape, or form. I certainly understand your situation.

We're studying security. I'm positive, from listening to you and your comments, that the rejection of one of your siblings coming into Canada was not a security issue. I just wanted you to know that.

I'm done.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Chair, I think trying to discredit a witness who was talking about the fact that her sister's experience... This is about a Canadian citizen and her different experiences in trying to bring three siblings to this country. Not being given a valid reason is an example of a security measure flaw in our system. This is the message this witness is trying to get out.

I find it very abrasive that my colleague is trying to discredit this witness and a Canadian citizen's experience with the security measures that were taken in her application process.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Chair, I want to make it abundantly clear that there is no way I wanted to discredit... I did the opposite with the witness. I have no intention in any way, shape, or form of discrediting anyone. And that's it.

**The Chair:** Do you want to get on this too?

**Hon. Gerry Byrne:** Sure.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** It's as simple as that. It has nothing to do with discrediting.

**The Chair:** Mr. Byrne wants to join the fray.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of my own questioning of the witnesses, I had established a direct linkage or a context to a security issue that the committee is indeed studying. Not to be argumentative here, but the marginalization through what is perceived in either perception or reality of an arbitrary process does indeed present the fostering of a potential security issue or security risk to the country. And it is therefore in keeping with the order of reference the committee has been tasked with.

Therefore, following on Mr. Weston's intervention, following on Mr. Weston's point of order, by questioning whether or not these topics are relevant to a security issue, I think we've established that both witnesses are providing the committee with valuable testimony in terms of determining what is a security risk and what Canada can increase its performance on with regard to that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Menegakis, you have 25 seconds.

Mr. Weston wants to join the fray. Okay.

**Mr. John Weston:** Not to belabour this, but for the benefit of all of us, I would propose that at an appropriate time we have an in-camera discussion around the terms of reference and how we can make sure no witness feels discredited yet every witness is relevant to this.

**The Chair:** Look, I thought we'd dealt with this issue.

Mr. Weston has raised a point of order, and I rule his point of order out of order.

Mr. Menegakis, you're coming very close to discrediting the witness. You have 25 seconds to either make a statement or ask a question.

• (1620)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Chair, I'm going to make a statement.

**The Chair:** Good show.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** I have no intention here of discrediting a witness. I was merely explaining to the witness the terms of reference, as I understand them to be in my interpretation of them.

Thank you. That's all I want to say.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Groguhé, you have five minutes.

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Rajaratnam, thank you for your remarks, which I consider very pertinent. You raise a question that is important in every case: how do we distinguish between individuals who pose a potential risk to our security and those who do not?

We all agree that it is important to ensure the security of the system. However, we need a fair and transparent system. When a temporary visa application is filed, it is important to get clear answers if it is refused.

With your permission, I will briefly share the example of a family living in my riding. You have two parents who are both permanent residents, and the father filed a temporary resident visa application for their two-year-old daughter so that she could join them since she was born outside Canada. They submitted two applications, and those applications were refused on the same grounds. That is to say that the parents were told that the person in question could not return to her country if she entered Canada, and for good reason: she is a child. Here we see the inconsistency and lack of transparency of the decisions that are made.

This morning, Don Davies proposed that an appeal measure be put in place so that people who submit a visa application can file an appeal and have their application reviewed. I would like to know

what improvements you consider necessary for the issuing of visas. Thank you.

[*English*]

**Ms. Renuka Rajaratnam:** I strongly believe in the full background being checked on the sponsor, the history, and the credibility of the sponsor. It's very important.

Looking back 26 years ago, when I sponsored my family, the visitors' visas that were issued—they sent out the letters—have I ever violated them? Here I have presented all these relevant supporting documents, and these are very important to me. At one point I thought to myself, "What did I do wrong?" I have been a very valuable employee of the Royal Bank for 25 years. I have been a good citizen of this country, and I'm very grateful to be a part of this country. This is my heritage now. I have the values of where I came from, my roots.

Somehow or other I feel like I have been let down at this point. I asked for my sister to be here for three weeks, and they did not give the reason. If two members of the same family have been entitled to come to Canada, why not the other person? It is important for closure, and not to pursue it again and go through the ordeal, to know the reason, what you have followed, and on which grounds you were rejected. It's so important.

I know initially when I sponsored 25 years ago for permanent residence, they told me my sister was not politically affected by what was happening. Somehow or other my brothers were let into the country, and my mother was let into the country. I don't see grounds where this is stipulated. It's kind of mind-boggling.

What do you follow? What are the immigration rules? That's what made me to go to the lawyer and say "I am covering all the angles to get my sister here so there won't be any reason for rejection". I covered everything. Some other things didn't work out the way I wanted. It was just one visit. I didn't want her to come to stay here. I didn't want her to enjoy any benefits. I said I was going to take care of all expenses during her stay.

I just want to know what rules I have to follow the next time when I'm sending out a visitor's visa.

Thank you.

• (1625)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Weston has the final five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John Weston:** I want to thank our witnesses today.

[*English*]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Amble, you have touched on the sensitive nerve we call our immigration policy, and in a way you have touched on everything that is magnificent about Canada and everything we would like to preserve.

Here we sit on a committee where we're proud of a Canada that is blind to colour and religion in how we administer our laws and immigration policies. One of the proudest things we can say is that if you ask a ten-year-old in one of our schools, they probably wouldn't be able to tell you too much about whether they like a person of one category or another. I think the younger you get in our country the more wonderful is the tolerance that you see.

By your studies you have exposed yourself to the question that some would call racial profiling. My question is, given what you do for a living, how do you manage to objectively pursue what you're doing and yet avoid the allegation that you're doing racial profiling in some of your studies?

**Mr. John Amble:** Thank you.

Racial profiling is obviously a touchy subject in a variety of areas and for a variety of reasons, and to some extent it's problematic. A policy that embraces racial profiling too closely, or hews too closely to a strict racial profiling line, runs the risk of blinding you, say, to dangers that don't fit that mould.

That being said, I think it's foolish not to pay attention to particular patterns, not to learn from the lessons others have experienced, and not to at least be aware of some of those patterns in terms of predicting where threats are mostly likely to originate.

**Mr. John Weston:** You mentioned that there were three major themes. You said one of them is who is travelling, and another is who is leaving and when they're coming back, and I missed the third one.

**Mr. John Amble:** Again, I'm not an immigration law expert or a border control technical expert, but in terms of principles, I think it should inform effective and secure immigration policy.

The third one is enacting immigration and border control policies that form a mutually supportive relationship with the work of law enforcement agencies at all levels and across the government to provide a maximum degree of security against the threat of terrorism.

**Mr. John Weston:** In our case we have Canada Border Services Agency, which is in charge of removing people. It sometimes has problems doing so. The problems relate to delays in appeals, in securing cooperation of countries of origin for travel documents, and making arrangements with airlines for safe removal of individuals, among other things.

Do you have any suggestions on how those difficulties can be surmounted?

**Mr. John Amble:** Well, they are considerable difficulties. The point I would make, as I mentioned, is it wasn't until after the 2003 plot in which a number of individuals.... The convicted ring leader was an Algerian who was found to be living in the country illegally. He had an asylum application rejected and then they lost track of him.

A subsequent investigation that was prompted by that case, as I said, revealed that for every ten Algerians specifically who were rejected asylum, nine of them stayed in the country and never left. The fact that it took that plot being uncovered, investigated, and prosecuted before that fact was acknowledged I think is dangerous. I don't think you can afford to wait.

In the process, I understand that the structural impediments to effectively deporting people who are due to be deported are serious. That being said, throughout that process there has to be a level of accountability for those individuals.

• (1630)

**Mr. John Weston:** That's very useful.

One of our witnesses talked about pre-screening as a key element. I know your studies have focused on the United States, but do you have any opinion on Canada's pre-screening? If not, how has the United States performed in keeping out security risks through its pre-screening processes?

**Mr. John Amble:** You mean pre-screening in the sense of applying for visas at a consulate abroad?

**Mr. John Weston:** I mean whatever you have to do to prevent undesirables from getting on a ship or a plane destined for your country.

**Mr. John Amble:** I think it probably has to be a systematic process. To be frank, there are going to be exceptions. There are going to be people who aren't allowed entry, say, on their first look. There's an important role for an appeals process because of that. There unfortunately has to be a balance between not letting in everybody who ought to be let in and keeping out those people who truly would do Canada harm.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Rajaratnam and Mr. Amble, thank you very much for spending time with the committee today. I especially want to thank Mr. Amble for staying so late.

We are going to suspend.

• (1630)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Thank you. We are going to reconvene the meeting.

We have two witnesses before us. Speaking to us by video conference from Toronto is Andrew Brouwer, a lawyer. He has appeared before this committee in the past with regard to the former Bill C-11 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Federal Courts Act. That was some time ago, sir. Thank you for coming.

We also have James Bissett. He has wide-ranging international experience, including being a former ambassador to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, and a chief of mission to Moscow for the International Organization for Migration. He has also served as a member of the Prime Minister's intelligence advisory committee.

Mr. Bissett, did I describe you correctly?

• (1635)

**Mr. James Bissett (As an Individual):** Yes, that's fine.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Brouwer, we'll let you go first.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer (Barrister and Solicitor, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to address the committee on this important topic.

I'm a refugee lawyer with the Refugee Law Office, which is a Legal Aid Ontario staff office in Toronto. Before coming to Legal Aid I was in private practice for about seven years with Jackman and Associates. My pre-law background was in public policy research and advocacy with the Maytree Foundation and with Citizens for Public Justice. It's a pleasure to be back before the committee.

I'd like to comment on a few of the issues. You have a wide-ranging study going on right now, but I'd like to comment specifically on security and admissibility, the advanced passenger screening program and interdiction, detention, and overseas decision-making. I will be brief; I know I have ten minutes.

As a Canadian citizen with a family and loved ones here, I am as committed to the safety and security of this country as any of the honourable members of this committee. But as someone who has represented quite a few people who have been suspected or been found to be inadmissible to Canada on security grounds, I believe that I have some insights that few policy-makers share.

One of those insights is that the security provisions of the current act—specifically sections 34 and 35 of IRPA—are far too broad and are applied in a manner that arbitrarily destroys the lives of innocent immigrants and refugees and their children with no benefit to Canada or to our national security.

I would like to give you a couple of examples from my own practice.

John—which is not his real name—grew up in South Sudan in the 1960s and 1970s. As an African Christian, he suffered brutal repression and violent sexual, physical, and emotional abuse throughout his youth, at the hands of soldiers from the local Sudanese army detachment who were Arab Muslims from the north.

In 1984, when he was about 21 years old, John became intrigued by a fledgling movement called the Sudan People's Liberation Movement or Army—the SPLA—which had sprung up to push for autonomy for South Sudan. John spent his summer vacation after the first year of university back home near Juba helping his older brothers to distribute leaflets about this new movement and guiding new recruits to the SPLA from the centre of town in Juba to the riverbank on his family's farm, where the new recruits would be picked up by boats and ferried to training camps for the SPLA, the newly formed organization.

John himself did not go to the camp or get any kind of military training. After that summer, he returned to university and then traveled to the U.S. and Canada, where he sought refugee protection. He has now been in Canada for 25 years and he is still not a permanent resident. The reason for this is his brief participation in the SPLA in that summer of 1984. There are no allegations that he ever carried a gun or received training as a fighter or participated in any act of violence.

There is no allegation that the SPLA itself engaged in human rights violations until several years after John had left the country, came to Canada, and ceased any connection to the group. Yet under the current interpretation of paragraph 34(1)(f) of IRPA, he is a terrorist, he is a member of a terrorist organization.

Then there is Salaam. She is Eritrean. She and her husband were farmers in Eritrea during the bloody 30-year war of independence from Ethiopia and the Red Terror. Her farm, like many in the region, was regularly bombed by the Ethiopian air force, her fields destroyed time and again, her neighbours and her cattle killed.

When fighters with the Eritrean Liberation Front, the ELF, came through her village and demanded food from her farm, she provided it. She did so willingly, although of course she would have been killed if she had refused. She came to be known in the village as “Mama ELF”.

Eventually she came to Canada and was recognized as a refugee here. Today, at the age of 65, she's considered by CIC to be a terrorist; she's inadmissible to Canada. There is no allegation—let's be clear—that Salaam ever engaged in terrorism or war crimes or crimes against humanity or any act of violence. She held no formal position within the ELF and had no involvement in their activities.

● (1640)

Moreover, there is no reliable evidence that the ELF ever engaged in terrorism or international crimes during the liberation war. The ELF is not a designated entity under the Anti-terrorism Act or the Criminal Code.

The problem is that membership is undefined. There is no temporality requirement. There is no danger assessment and no transparency or accountability in the assessment of whether groups are terrorist groups under the act. The result is completely arbitrary and irrational.

I gather there is a technical problem.

**The Chair:** Everything is fine. Proceed, sir. Can you hear us?

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Sure, I will.

I can now hear you, but my phone is ringing from your technician. Should I answer it or not?

**The Chair:** I don't think you should answer that call.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** I'll just be a second. I apologize.

I'm told by the chair of the committee that there is no problem.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** It's the CIA.

**The Chair:** We'd better stop the clock. He's on a call.

Maybe it's someone who wants him from his office.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Oh, zoom out, thank you.

I am told you are seeing too much of me. I'm zoomed in too close. I am going to zoom out.

**The Chair:** Sir, you look fantastic. Just proceed.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** I apologize for that. I will.

The result of this lack of temporality, the lack of a danger assessment, the lack of any transparency or accountability in the assessment of whether groups are terrorist groups under the act results in a completely arbitrary and irrational designation of people as terrorists.

There is, of course, the provision that was designed specifically for the correction of mistakes stemming from this overbreadth of subsection 34(1), and that is subsection 34(2), the ministerial relief provision. However, in practice over the past seven or eight years that provision has been gutted; in my submission, in the hands of the current minister it has been turned into a completely illusory remedy.

Unlike the groups formally designated under section 83.05 of the Criminal Code, where there is a specific procedure and the groups are gazetted, the list that's used by immigration authorities for refugees and immigrants is created behind closed doors with no public input and no transparency. This is a serious problem, in my submission, and does untold damage to the security of refugees without having any discernible positive impact on the security of Canada.

The next topic I'd like to touch on is the advanced passenger information program and interdiction, two topics covered by previous witnesses. The attraction of this kind of technology is obvious. Who wouldn't support checking people to make sure they aren't terrorists or criminals before they come to Canada?

The problem, however, is that it's not the terrorists who are being interdicted overseas. It's the asylum seekers. Interdiction measures targeting improperly documented travellers seeking to travel to Canada are not about national security. They are about preventing asylum seekers from getting to Canada.

Your CIC and CBSA witnesses from February 14 and 16 responded to questions from Mr. Davies, a member of the committee, and were quite clear that the real goal of the interdiction program is specifically to prevent or reduce the arrival of refugees seeking refugee protection.

When we contemplate this, however, we need to remember a crucial point. Of those who make refugee claims in Canada, about 48% are accepted by the IRB as having a well-founded fear of persecution or as being at substantial risk of torture.

What then of the 4,000 improperly documented people interdicted each year? Even if only half of those interdicted people were still planning to make a refugee claim, we are still looking at a 48% acceptance rate at almost 1,000 bona fide refugees being turned back before coming to Canada and being denied access to protection in Canada as a direct result of our interdiction activities.

What happens to these people when they're turned away?

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Sir, you have about a minute left and you have a lot to go through. Maybe you could wind up.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** I will. I thought all of that problem with the phone call would give me a little extra time. No?

**The Chair:** Nice try, but we stopped the clock.

Please continue, sir; you have a minute.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** There are two other issues I wanted to briefly touch on, and very briefly. One has to do with the detention of children. You have my notes before you, I think.

I just want to note that with respect to the detention of children, the statistics that were provided to you by CBSA need to be

questioned, because many of the children who are in detention centres are not included in the statistics. I'd be happy to explain why, if there's a question about that.

Given the lack of time, the only other note I would make is in response to a comment made by Claudette Deschênes of CIC, who said that visa officer decisions are seldom overturned by the court. In my practice I have litigated many of these cases. In almost every case I've brought, the case has been settled prior to getting to Federal Court. So the statistics on the Federal Court refusals are skewed. Again, I'd be happy to talk about that if there are any questions.

Thank you.

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

We do have your written comments, and they will be translated. As soon as that's done all members of the committee will have your complete presentation.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Mr. Bissett.

**Mr. James Bissett:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the committee for inviting me to speak to you.

I'm not a member of the Fraser Institute, but more relevantly, I was the head of the Canadian Immigration Service from 1985 to 1990. So I'm going to talk about—

**The Chair:** So I was half right.

**Mr. James Bissett:** Yes, you had that right.

I'm going to talk about a controversial subject today. I'm going to concentrate on security in relation to Muslim immigration. I think it's an important subject, and it's one that very few people want to talk about, but because of my age, I think I can get away with saying things that other people might be frightened to say. It's an important subject, and it's one that I think the committee should certainly examine very carefully.

Before I do that, let me say that I'm prepared afterwards to answer questions on any of the immigration subjects you're dealing with. I'd be happy to do so.

The basic problem of security screening, in my own view—quite apart from Muslim immigration—is that the volume of immigrants who are coming to Canada, and the large number more recently of temporary foreign workers and of foreign students, and the volume of asylum seekers who are coming into the country make it almost impossible for visa officers abroad or CSIS security officers to do an adequate job. They just can't do it. They spend all their time issuing visas, to the point, as you probably already know, that very few of our immigrants today are even interviewed or seen by a visa officer, quite apart from a security officer.

That's the basic problem. Security abroad of people coming to Canada is essentially non-existent. That is the most serious threat, in the broader term. We have, for example, 25,000 to 35,000 asylum seekers coming in from any country in the world. None of them is screened for criminality, security, or health before they arrive.

Very few immigrants are even looked at, and none of the temporary workers go through security or criminal checks. They just come into the country. There's no tracking of them; we don't keep track of them. The thing is a bit of a mess, quite frankly.

But let me get back to the one subject that I think is the most serious security issue for Canada, and that is Muslim immigration.

From 1990 to 2009, we admitted more than 530,000 Muslim immigrants coming direct from Muslim countries, not counting the many thousand who come from England, from France, and from the United States. We know that large numbers of these are coming from countries that produce terrorism—from Pakistan, from Algeria, from Saudi Arabia, from Morocco, from Iran. I have some figures here.

From Iran, for example, we had 40,586 immigrants during that period, 2000 to 2009; we had 118,000 and more from Pakistan; we had 40,000 and some from Morocco; 30,000 and some from Algeria. Very few of these people are screened for security, because the resources don't exist. You have already been told, I think, from a colleague of mine that one in ten applicants from Pakistan may get a security screening.

The other problem is that screenings in most of these countries are totally useless, because they get the information from the local authorities. In many of these countries, you can buy a criminal clearance or a security clearance for a significant bribe. I know many of those cases from my own experience.

The only effective measure, in a sense, of having security screening at all today is that the immigrants themselves don't know that they're not being screened, and therefore it acts as a form of deterrence. That's about how effective it is. It would be foolish—and I'm not foolish enough—to suggest that the Muslims who are coming here, or even the greater number of them, pose any kind of security risk. We know they don't.

On the other hand, it would be foolish and naive to think that many of those who are coming are not possible terrorists, or at least are susceptible and naive enough to buy into the extreme types of Islam that they are being taught in some of the mosques in Canada.

We've had the experience of Europe. There isn't a European country that has experienced fairly large-scale migration from Muslim countries that doesn't have very serious problems both from a security point of view and from an integration point of view.

From the security point of view, the bombings in London, the bombings in Madrid, the murder of van Gogh in the Netherlands, the outrage because of the Danish cartoons.... All of those European countries have had terrorist experiences.

• (1650)

Integration is a serious problem in France, in Germany, in London. There are many sections of England where Muslim immigrants are practising sharia law and have constituted Muslim enclaves with very little hope of ever integrating. This is true in Denmark. It's true in Sweden. It's a serious problem in the Netherlands and in Germany. These countries have already begun to take measures to try to integrate their people.

Canada has not been immune. We've had the Toronto 18 plotting to behead the Prime Minister and blow up the CN Tower. We've had Momin Khawaja, who participated in the bombing plot in London and is serving life imprisonment. We have had Ahmed Ressay, the Algerian asylum seeker who attempted to try to blow up the Los Angeles airport. He came into Montreal as an asylum seeker. He didn't bother even appearing before the IRB. He was travelling back and forth from Afghanistan.

We've had that kind of problem here, and we're dealing with it, I think, fairly effectively. But the real problem is that we should be screening people before they get here. I think the government's step of forcing people who apply for citizenship to read the new pamphlet that's out that suggests some of the obligations and responsibilities of citizenship is a step in the right direction. But we should be doing that before people come to Canada, not after they get here.

People coming from these particularly Muslim countries, what I would apply to all countries, should be interviewed personally by a visa officer, as they used to be. If the visa officer thought there was anything suspicious, he referred it to the security officer at the post, who did a much more thorough examination. That's gone by the board now. We're not even seeing people.

As I mentioned once before, if you are in Bangladesh and you want to come to Canada, you fill out the forms, attach your certificates, your trades, your qualifications, which then go to London. A junior officer screens those papers, and if all is in order stamps and mails the visa back to Dakar, where you will pick it up and fly to Montreal or Toronto. You don't see anybody. This is an outrage, in my view.

That's my major point. We are lucky, in that the Muslim communities in Canada are a very diverse group. They represent almost every shade and variety of Islam. They tend to be better educated than the Muslims who have gone to Europe. They have better employment chances than the European Muslims have, but we needn't be complacent.

In 2006 an Environics poll showed that of the Muslims polled in Canada, 12% firmly supported and believed that the Toronto 18 were doing the right thing. Of the roughly 700,000 Muslims in Canada at that point, 12% represented over 80,000 Muslims in Canada who fully approved of the Toronto 18 plot. I think that's cause for concern. The media played down that 12% and some of the Muslim organizations in Canada dismissed it. But it's serious. In my view, the committee should take a look at this.

I think all immigrants, not necessarily elderly people or young children, but all of the male members and spouses of Muslim immigrants coming from countries where we know they produce terrorists, should be interviewed and seen. That should carry on to other countries as well.

The more critical issue here is that we shouldn't pretend we have a war against terror. It's not a war against terror. It's a war primarily against Muslim terror, and more effort should be made by the government to integrate the immigrants who are here, particularly the young ones.

My own Muslim friends, I know very well, are very concerned about the number of young Muslims in Canada being influenced by extreme Islamists in some of the mosques in Canada. We have young Somali Canadians going off to support al-Shabab in Somalia. We have these young boys in Toronto who are willing to plot against it. The committee should do something about that if they can.

Thank you.

• (1655)

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

We always enjoy your presentations. Your speaking without notes is always impressive.

Mr. Merrifield, a fresh voice. You have seven minutes, sir.

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Thank you very much.

I appreciate your comments to the committee with regard to Muslim immigration, and your concern with regard to that. There really is a battle in the Islamic religion between the extremists and the moderates. It's a battle to discern who's a moderate and who's an extremist, and the threat that creates to the population of Canada.

I don't argue with that, but you made some interesting comments with regard to the number of immigrants who are coming in, the foreign worker program and so on, and that they're not being checked thoroughly enough or having a one-on-one and that should cause us a bit of concern.

You also wrote a paper that asks if Canada poses a security threat to the United States. Your thoughts there were that the United States had to tighten the 49th parallel because they didn't think we could prevent terrorists from coming into Canada and we provided an opportunity for them to be siphoned across the 49th. I think this is true.

Chertoff was the head of the Department of Homeland Security initially after 9/11. I've been in meetings where he almost indicated we had a terrorist under every tree in Canada. That's a bit of an extreme comment, but nonetheless he said hundreds of them are coming across. I challenged him. I asked him where they are because he didn't catch them at the border. If he said there are hundreds and he knew there are hundreds, where are they? Then he had to backtrack.

My question comes down to the issue of Canadian security and how you compare that to the United States' security. Every time there's another threat, whether it's the shoe bomber, the diaper bomber, the cartridge bomber, added layers of security have been put on, in the United States and Canada and internationally.

All these bombers attacked America, not Canada. If they were successful, the last two would have landed in Canada. But it goes to what was said earlier about the advanced list, and making sure we know who gets on a plane coming to Canada prior to their landing and trying to come in, or into America.

But specifically, in your estimation, what would America have over Canada with regard to security, as far as these people coming into their country?

**Mr. James Bissett:** First, Canada has done a great deal on the security side since 9/11. I've got a long list of things that we've done here. We responded quickly and very well. Three months after 9/11, Parliament passed an omnibus terrorist bill. Not everybody agreed with it, but we were shown to be taking action. We did a lot of other things, but at the heart of the matter, the U.S. Congress thinks we haven't done enough. They see us as the weak link in North American security and they see it primarily because of our refugee and immigration policies. Hillary Clinton has said more than once that the 19 terrorists who blew up the World Trade Center came from Canada. CBS announced on the day of the bombing of the trade center that they came into Vermont from Quebec.

• (1700)

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** And they were wrong.

**Mr. James Bissett:** They're wrong, and everybody's been attempting to tell them they're wrong, but even fairly recently they've repeated it. So that started them off, and they still have that view.

They've created a monstrosity in the Department of Homeland Security, with a budget of \$70 billion or \$80 billion. They fortified the border. It's no longer the undefended border. It's essentially militarized, and it's primarily because of the—

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** Yes. Before my time has gone, though, I've been in Washington working very closely with the U.S. Congress and Senate on these issues. You're absolutely right on their perception. They're wrong, 100% wrong.

My question was more of a technical one, because they're wrong on this as well, in my estimation, that we are more vulnerable or we are weaker on our immigration system than they are on theirs with regard to foreigners coming into their country.

**Mr. James Bissett:** No, we're not. We're much better in many ways than they are on the immigration side. We are more vulnerable on the asylum-seeker side, where we let in 37,000 asylum-seekers in 2008, as I said. They just walk into the country without any kind of screening. They're in the country for two or three years before they even get to the IRB, and when they get to the IRB, if they're found not to be genuine, very few of them are ever sent home.

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** So your recommendation is to tighten up the refugee system.

**Mr. James Bissett:** Definitely.

They're also better than we are on the technical side, in some respects. They're ahead of us a little in the micro-biometrics. They screen their immigrants—not the illegal ones who cross the southern border, but the ones who apply from abroad. They get better screening.

Our own security forces rely a great deal on the U.S. security information. If we screen we usually try to get information from the U.S. on the country concerned. They know much more about what's going on there than we do, because our CSIS officers are not allowed to conduct operations abroad, as you know.

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** The foreign worker program is not going away. Especially in the west, our number one problem is a lack of labour, so we're going to need foreign workers.

In light of what you just said, should we be looking more to the United States for foreign workers than to other international countries?

**Mr. James Bissett:** I am concerned about the foreign worker program, because we're bringing almost as many temporary foreign workers into Canada as immigrants. They don't have to meet any educational, language, or skill requirements. Some of them are highly skilled and educated, but the bulk of them are not. They're fairly unskilled, reasonably cheap labour that's being brought into the country.

Employers have to get them because they can't get skilled workers from the immigration stream any more. You might wait eight years, if you're a good carpenter, mechanic, or tool-maker. You're in the backlog of a million people. So the employer can't get those kinds of workers, although there has been some improvement in that with this list of 29 occupations that can be pulled to the front of the line.

I don't think we should be making the same mistake as the Europeans did in the sixties and seventies, bringing in thousands of temporary workers who are foreign but not temporary. They don't go home. There's no control over them in Canada. They come in. They can arrive in Brandon to work in a meat-packing plant, and the next day they can fly to Toronto. The employer isn't even required to report that they've left.

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

Mr. Kellway.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Bissett and Mr. Brouwer, for your testimony today.

Mr. Brouwer, you unfortunately ran out of time because of what's more of an aesthetic issue than a technical one—not to imply you're not a good-looking guy. So I want to use some of my seven minutes to give you the opportunity to finish some thoughts on the issues you didn't get a chance to finish.

Of particular interest to me is the issue of detention of children. I wonder if you can complete your thoughts on that for us, please.

• (1705)

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Thank you so much for that opportunity.

You had some witnesses earlier in these proceedings who talked to you about the detention of children, and you were given the figure of 227 children detained in one fiscal year. That number was given to you by CBSA. I want to note for you that in reality the majority of children in detention centres are probably not being captured by the statistics, because they're considered by CBSA to be guests of the detainees rather than detainees themselves. That's because they're Canadian citizens and CBSA cannot detain children who are Canadian citizens.

CBSA takes the position that they're only detaining the non-citizen parents. The Canadian children who are detained with them are theoretically free to go, and are merely accompanying the parents in jail because their parents choose to have them there. That of course is a legal nicety that's as meaningless as the minister's

insistence that Canada never deports Canadian-citizen children; they only deport their non-citizen parents. It's the parents who choose to bring their young children along with them when they're being deported. That's a way for the Canadian government to wash its hands of deportations and detentions of children that, from our experience at the refugee law office, appear to be significantly higher than the 227 reported by CBSA.

I wanted to make sure that the committee was aware of that. I suggest that if you have CBSA back before you, ask them for some clarification and more detailed numbers on the actual number of kids in immigration jails in Canada.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Mr. Brouwer, do you have a sense of the numbers yourself?

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Unfortunately, I don't.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Sorry, I interrupted.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** There was a report by Janet Cleveland. I think she appeared before you at a previous proceeding. I think she included some discussion and did some research on the number of kids in detention. I'd refer back to that.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Could you provide that report to the committee?

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Of course.

**The Chair:** You can send that to the clerk, Mr. Brouwer.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Brouwer, I interrupted you. You were continuing your testimony.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Thank you.

The other comment I wanted to make about detention was in relation to some evidence you got about the monitoring of detention conditions by UNHCR and the Red Cross. I think it was Mr. Davies who asked whether the Red Cross is paid by the Canadian government to do the detention monitoring. Mr. Linklater, of CIC, I believe responded that the Red Cross is not, and that was the end of that conversation.

What I wanted to make sure this committee knows, though, is that the monitoring of detention conditions by the Red Cross is done on a strictly confidential basis. So while it's true, I understand, that the Red Cross regularly monitors the jails where immigrants and refugees are detained, they report back to immigration and CBSA on a confidential basis. There's absolutely no public reporting about their findings. There's no transparency in the process. So while on paper it looks as if there's some degree of accountability, in fact there's not. Obviously a private and confidential report to the government about its own detention practices, in the absence of any public disclosure, is not accountability. I wanted to make sure that this committee was aware of that.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Thank you very much.

You and Mr. Bissett seem to come at the security issue from very different perspectives. You described sections 34 and 35 as too broad and arbitrary. If I understood Mr. Bissett correctly, and I think he has been pretty clear, we have inadequate security procedures to deal with terrorism, and in particular, with Muslim terrorism.



From your perspective as a lawyer, I'm wondering what thoughts you might have to share with us about Mr. Bissett's testimony today.

• (1710)

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Thank you.

Well, there are a few issues. I'll try to limit it.

I guess one of the key points is that what Mr. Bissett was talking about is pretty different from what I was talking about. Our subjects are different.

I was talking about the problems specifically in the law and in the application of the law. I don't think it's sustainable to argue that the act itself isn't broad enough to cover the kinds of so-called terrorists Mr. Bissett was talking about. The act is extremely broad and certainly is broad enough to cover the kinds of people he was referring to when he used his examples of the shoe bomber and the others.

Mr. Bissett's comments about the need for more overseas screening doesn't appear to be rooted in any direct experience of threats to Canada by people who weren't screened overseas. I think it's probably obvious to you that I'm going to have concerns, and I would assume that they are shared fairly broadly, about Mr. Bissett's comments, repeatedly, specifically about Muslim terrorism. I think the issue for national security has to do with terrorism and national security and what's required to keep Canada safe. Turning it into a religious or ethnic problem is obviously a problem from an equality and human rights perspective.

In terms of Mr. Bissett's suggestion that every single person seeking to come to Canada be screened first, I frankly have no particular problem with that, if it is doable. I can't imagine that CIC has the resources to send off well-educated and trained officers to interview every single person seeking to come to Canada.

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

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** I don't think they do. If it were workable, it would be fine.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Mr. Byrne.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, both of you are presenting fairly dichotomous views of the process of evaluating applicants for immigration into our country.

Mr. Brouwer, you're presenting a point of view that information obtained for individuals in sub-Saharan Africa, where record-keeping and other intelligence gathering may be less than robust, still is flagged on a file for years and years to come even after the individual presents himself or herself to Canada for years.

Mr. Bissett, you present an immigration screening system that basically could not tell you whether or not a current applicant has so much as a criminal record or any affiliation with a potential terrorist organization. If immigration officials were here before us, particularly the deputy minister, I think they would want to say that you're both wrong, which I think probably presents some interest to this committee in terms of what you had to say.

Mr. Bissett, I'm going to zero in on some of your comments, because I think as a committee, as parliamentarians, we really need you to uncover your suggestion, to provide further evidence to your suggestion that there really is basically no screening that occurs to the thousands and thousands of would-be landed immigrant applicants to Canada. Can you elaborate on what evidence you have for that particular suggestion?

**Mr. James Bissett:** We have the evidence of the deputy director of CSIS, Mr. Hooper, who gave evidence before another parliamentary committee that one in ten applicants in Pakistan got the security screening. That was two or three years ago, when the volume of immigrants coming to Canada was not nearly as large.

Very few are being screened for security. On top of that, there's the problem I mentioned, that in many countries it's somewhat meaningless. I know of cases myself. I did a full investigation of a Chinese Triad member from Macau—he was running all the rackets in Macau—who ended up in Vancouver. Our investigation revealed that he had a completely clean criminal certificate from the Macau chief of police. Obviously he bought it. Bribery and corruption in many countries are endemic and you can get any document you want.

We used to take ministers of immigration into the marketplace in Islamabad or Delhi and ask them what university they would like to have a graduating certificate from—Harvard, Columbia, Oxford? For a few rupees, you got such an authentic copy of a degree from Cambridge that only a professional would know the difference.

I think that more important than the security screening is the fact that at one time experienced visa officers working in Islamabad or in Dhaka interviewed the immigrants and their wives, and through a series of questions and counselling could tell very quickly whether the person was someone who could come to Canada and live comfortably here according to our basic principles, traditions, and values. And they had, at that time—this was controversial, and they still have it in the act somewhere, but it's not being used—the discretion to maybe turn people down or to accept people who didn't meet the point system. They used their good judgment about whether these individuals coming to Canada would be able to quickly establish themselves, get a job, be on their own within a year without government help and do well.

The immigrants prior to 1990 did well. We didn't have to spend millions of dollars on their integration or their settlement. They came here and got settled themselves. We never had problems with integration as such. The immigrants who have been coming since then, because there are so many of them, are not being interviewed or counselled. They don't know about Canadian values or principles or our traditions of free speech, gender equality; none of those principles are taught to them or counselled. They don't get it. They used to get it personally. They used to get it in group counselling sessions.

• (1715)

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

Mr. Chong, welcome to the committee. You have seven minutes.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bissett, I have some questions for you, to continue with Mr. Byrne's line of questioning.

You stated that at one point experienced visa officers screened applicants who were applying for entry to Canada. Were all applicants screened by visa officers at one point in our country's immigration policy?

**Mr. James Bissett:** No. Some of the family migrants—parents, grandparents, and children—were not necessarily seen. In some cases, yes, but in most cases it was the principal applicant, the independent immigrant, who was interviewed.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Is it safe to say that at one past point in our country's immigration policy all primary applicants were interviewed by visa officers?

**Mr. James Bissett:** Pretty well all, yes.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** When was that policy ended?

**Mr. James Bissett:** It probably started in the early nineties when the volume of immigrants started to increase to a quarter of a million a year, and the visa officers abroad simply couldn't see everybody, so they had to just do it by paper.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** You referenced testimony given by the former deputy director of CSIS, Mr. Hooper, who said that, out of Pakistan, only one in ten applicants was screened for security purposes.

Do you know the current levels of interviews being done for primary applicants today, setting aside the security screening, but just the interviews by visa officers at our consulates and embassies abroad?

**Mr. James Bissett:** I don't know the percentage, but visa officers who I know and talk to on a daily basis tell me that very few are interviewed.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I presume it would be more than one in ten.

**Mr. James Bissett:** I can't answer that. I'm not sure.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Okay.

One of the concerns you raised in your opening remarks was the issue of security, which is what this study is all about. You stated that your view is that one of the most important tools we could use to ensure our security is to conduct more human intelligence—in other words, more interviews on the part of our public service of people who wish to come to Canada. At one point, prior to the 1990s, we did that for primary applicants.

If we're going to address the concerns you've raised, and we're going to do that by conducting a greater number of interviews of applicants—if not all—to Canada, it seems to me that there are two ways to go about doing this. One is to increase the resources of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to handle the record volumes of people arriving on our shores. Alternatively, we can adjust the levels of immigration and foreign workers in order to ensure that the department has the sufficient resources to do those in-person interviews. Or we could use a combination of both.

I just want to get your views on what you think is practical, and what you would recommend to the government as the right approach.

● (1720)

**Mr. James Bissett:** I agree that there are two ways of doing it, and maybe a third, which I think is being proposed now by the government, which is to let Canadian employers go abroad to do a lot of the selection.

I was the officer in charge in London in the 1970s, and many Canadian companies would come to England to recruit, particularly machine trades people: tool-makers, machinists, and lathe operators. The employers would interview them, recruit them, and promise them a job. We would give them a very cursory interview to make sure they didn't have a criminal record. If we were concerned—because we weren't really concerned much about security in England—we would refer them for security. But other than that, we processed them quite quickly, and got them here quickly because they had already been recruited by Westinghouse, Massey-Harris, or another firm.

I think the government is thinking of perhaps doing that in future. That's another method of doing it.

My own view is that we're taking too many people into Canada. I'm on the record as saying that. Why are we one of the few industrial countries in the world with 36 million people that has to rely on foreign labour to fill our jobs? That's inexcusable in a modern country. So yes, I would cut back on the numbers and get the quality.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I have another question for you.

Over the last several decades the federal government has devolved significant responsibility for immigration to provincial governments. This started with the accord between Canada and Quebec. That was revised a number of times, but it's also now spread to the provinces. So one of the things I hear from people is that there is a concern that there are now dozens and dozens of different ways to get into Canada through federal or provincial programs, often with very different rules and very different processes in place.

Is it a concern to you at all that these myriad ways to enter Canada are creating a system so complex that it is more difficult for us to address the security side of immigration?

**Mr. James Bissett:** Absolutely. I entirely agree.

If you look at the 2010 annual figures, 17% of the 280,000 immigrants who came in were selected under the federal government's points system. That's 48,000 and some immigrants out of 280,000 were selected because they met the points. The rest were family accompanying the principal applicants; they were relatives sponsored by other relatives in Canada; they were almost 13,000 caregivers—would you believe it?—who came in; and 30,000 and some more from the provinces.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. James Bissett:** They're not required to meet any selection criteria. The province chooses them.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Go ahead, Mr. Davies.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Bissett, I was quite stunned by your testimony—I wrote it down as literally as I could—that none of the temporary foreign workers go through security or health checks.

• (1725)

**Mr. James Bissett:** Some do health. I said criminal and security.

**Mr. Don Davies:** You know, of course, that under this government the use of temporary foreign workers has exploded. I think it's a fair comment. We issued 185,000 visas, or re-issuance of visas, to temporary foreign workers last year alone. It's been estimated that there are approximately half a million temporary foreign workers present in the country. Your testimony, sir, is that none of them have gone through criminal checks, and this government has let them into our country?

**Mr. James Bissett:** As far as I know, they don't have any criminal checks or security checks. If they're working in health-related occupations, they do have to have a health test.

**Mr. Don Davies:** You were kind enough to say you were old enough to be blunt. And I'm young enough to be impertinent, so I'm going to put a couple of tough questions to you, if I may, just to probe some of these.

You referred to the fact that there were mosques in this country, and implied quite strongly that there are mosques that are preaching unacceptable messages. Can you tell us what mosques those are, sir?

**Mr. James Bissett:** No, I can't tell you, but I get this from Muslim friends of mine who are in a position to know. I can name them, and I'm quite sure they could tell you the names of the mosques, and be willing to.

Salim Mansur, who is a professor at Western University, is one who is—

**Mr. Don Davies:** Is your information second-hand about that? I just wondered if you had direct knowledge.

Second, you said there were some 40,000 Iranians who have entered our country from 2000 to 2009. Are you aware of any cases of Iranian terrorists in this country?

**Mr. James Bissett:** There was only one that I can think of, who was eventually actually removed. I forget his name. He was alleged to be an Iranian agent and was ordered deported. That's the only one I can recall.

**Mr. Don Davies:** In terms of numbers, it's always an open battle, I think, in Parliament about the number of people we let in. You've made, I think, an inference that we're letting in far more people today than in the past.

I've done some research, and from 1860 to 2009, as a percentage of population, we let in 0.97% of our population; from 1900 to 1949, we let in 1.34% as a percentage of population; from 1900 to 2009, a little over 1%. The current rate today is 0.7%. So as a percentage of population, we're actually low by historical standards.

Now, the only possible explanation, if your testimony is accurate, is that we had far more people checking 20, 40, and 60 years ago than we do today. Is that the case?

**Mr. James Bissett:** No, that's not the case. But the numbers were lower through the 1970s and 1980s. The largest number that came to Canada was in 1913, we had some 400,000 people come here.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Surely we weren't checking all those.

**Mr. James Bissett:** We weren't checking them at all. We were sending them out to the prairies.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you. Some of those immigrants were my grandparents.

If I might just turn to Mr. Brouwer—

**Mr. James Bissett:** All through the 1980s, we seldom went above 100,000.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you.

Mr. Brouwer, I just want to give my remaining time to you. You've been listening to us. What other points do you think we should know, that you feel are important?

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Thank you very much.

There were a couple of points that I did want to follow up on a little.

One is with respect to the screening and the comment of the CSIS officer that only one in ten applications from Pakistan get security-screened. We need to keep in mind that these officers have the tools they need to do the screening. Every decision is made by a visa officer. If the visa officers think, on paper, there's any possibility of a security concern, they can conduct an interview, they can seek advice from the Canada Border Services Agency, they can send the case to CSIS to get advice.

This is the process I see. Of course I deal primarily with refugees and with family members of refugees trying to come to Canada. I can tell you that in virtually all my cases there have been personal interviews, and issues around security have been examined pretty closely.

The other point I had hoped to make is again with respect to the issue of visa officer competence. I'd refer you to a decision of Justice Snider in the Federal Court, from April of last year, in a case called Ghirmatsion. I can forward that to the committee. Justice Snider undertook a very careful assessment of the training and the competence of visa officers overseas. This was all with respect to one particular officer, but her comments about the degree of training and oversight and support for visa officers is enlightening. I'd like the committee to keep that in mind as they hear the comments of the immigration authorities, talking about the wonderful decisions made by visa officers.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Andrew Brouwer:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Menegakis, you have one minute, if you're fast.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** I'd be happy to pass that minute to one of my colleagues, on my left or on my right.

**The Chair:** As soon as the bells ring, you're finished.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Chairman, I'm on Mr. Menegakis's left.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Oh, are you?

**The Chair:** Time's a-wasting. Get going, Mr..... Who's going? Mr. Weston.

**Mr. John Weston:** Thank you.

It seems as if we're standing at a very important moment in history. Mr. Bissett and Mr. Brouwer, thank you both for speaking to us.

If you had one suggestion for us as a committee to improve the security of Canadians, what would it be?

**Mr. James Bissett:** I certainly disagree with Mr. Brouwer about Muslim immigration, and my focus on that is a human rights issue. Anybody who can read the newspapers these days or watch television knows where the terrorist acts are occurring and who is doing them.

Europe has given us an example. If you don't deal with these issues early, you've got a very serious problem on your hands.

I wouldn't go as far as Raheel Raza, a very prominent Muslim woman in Canada, an author, writer, and commentator, who has advocated that we have a moratorium on Muslim immigration until we can get a clearer idea of who's coming. I would say that's the most important thing.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, both of you, that we have to go. The bells are ringing. They're silent bells, but they're ringing. We all have to go and vote.

You're both very qualified witnesses, and we appreciate this. On behalf of the committee, thank you, Mr. Brouwer and Mr. Bissett, for making your contribution to the committee.

This meeting is adjourned.

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