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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. I think we'll start the committee. This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, meeting number 73, on March 21, 2013.

We are reviewing Mr. Shory's private member's bill, Bill C-425, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (honouring the Canadian Armed Forces).

This morning we have the minister and some of his colleagues, who are going to make some comments on this bill.

Mr. Dykstra and I have often claimed to be the longest-serving members of this committee, currently, at least, but Ms. Chow has served much longer than we have, and it's a pleasure and a challenge to see her here today.

Minister Kenney, welcome to the committee, and thank you for coming. You have three of your colleagues with you, and I'll let you introduce them to the committee. As usual, sir, you have up to 10 minutes to make a presentation to the committee.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism): Thank you, Chairman. Merci beaucoup.

I'm glad to see my former critic, Ms. Chow, back here, although I hope she's not going to plan on staying. She was the toughest critic I ever had, Mr. Chairman, but I welcome her back.

Perhaps I could invite our officials to introduce themselves, because I'm not aware of their precise titles.

Mr. Donald Piragoff (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister's Office, Department of Justice): I am Donald Piragoff, senior assistant deputy minister, Department of Justice.

Ms. Nicole Girard (Director General, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): I am Nicole Girard, director general of citizenship and multiculturalism branch at Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Mr. Eric Stevens (Counsel, Legal Services, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): I'm Eric Stevens in legal services at the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Thank you to our officials for being here.

Thank you, colleagues. I appreciate this opportunity to speak in support of the private member's bill moved by our colleague, Devinder Shory from Calgary Northeast, Bill C-425.

This legislation aims to honour those who serve in the Canadian Forces by granting citizenship sooner to its members who are not already Canadian. While there is only a small number of permanent residents in the Canadian armed forces, it seems appropriate that these individuals, who are willing to put their lives on the line in the defence of Canada, should have access to an expedited process for citizenship.

I appreciate that Member of Parliament Shory is aiming to recognize the unique role played by our Canadian armed forces members and the sacrifices they make on behalf of Canada.

Secondly, as you know, this bill aims to protect the value of Canadian citizenship, as it would enhance our ability to take it away from those who undermine our national security and who threaten the fundamental values on which Canadian citizenship is grounded.

We believe that Canadian citizenship is about far more than the right to carry a passport. It's not just about privileges and rights; it's also about obligations and responsibilities. Citizenship defines who we are as Canadians, including our mutual responsibilities to one another and a shared commitment to values that are rooted in our history, values such as the importance of democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental human rights.

Canada has one of the highest naturalization rates in the world. Since 2006, for example, on average, over 170,000 permanent residents have become citizens per year. It is not surprising to me that so many people are eager to become citizens of the greatest country in the world.

Even if it was decades ago, most new Canadians tell me they still remember the day and the moment at which they became citizens. The day is special for many reasons, but taking the oath is the moment when a person makes a commitment to Canada and to the Canadian family. They promise to obey the laws of our country, to respect our traditions, and to be loyal to our head of state and our country.

Our newest citizens often tell me they wish to protect our citizenship, to strengthen it, and to deepen the sense of shared belonging. That is why the government launched the citizenship action plan three years ago: to strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship and to deepen attachment to it.

Colleagues, the government has undertaken measures to emphasize and encourage integration into Canadian society and ensure that citizenship has real, durable meaning.

As the bill is currently written, the deemed renunciation provision would apply to Canadian citizens who are also legal residents of another country. Should they not have dual citizenship, however, this could render some individuals stateless.

As you know, Chairman, Canada is party to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which we ratified in 1978. To ensure that we respect these international commitments, I would ask the committee to consider an amendment so that only those with dual citizenship would be deemed to have renounced their Canadian citizenship under the provisions proposed in this bill.

Furthermore, in its current form, the bill would deem a Canadian citizen to have renounced their citizenship if they engage in an act of war against Canada or the Canadian armed forces. But as I believe the committee has already heard from other witnesses, there is no clear definition of what constitutes an act of war. I would suggest, therefore, that the committee amend the bill by replacing that term with other acts that are more clearly defined in law.

It's important to note that under the 1947 Citizenship Act, a Canadian could have their citizenship taken away if they were convicted of having committed acts of treason, or if they served in the armed forces of a country that was at war with Canada, or if they unlawfully traded or communicated with the enemy during a time of war.

Indeed, prior to 1947, one's status as a subject could also of course be alienated on similar grounds, but more typically that occurred through capital punishment. There's the famous case of Kanao Inouye, the Kamloops Kid, Canadian born, who went to Japan during the Second World War, was a Japanese subject, committed war crimes against Canadian prisoners, and subsequently was executed following a court martial conviction following the war.

● (0850)

The remedy, if you will, for acts of treason was capital punishment, indeed up until some 20 years ago when it was removed from legislation.

I also think it is important to point out that the vast majority of the democratic world allows for the deprivation of citizenship for traitors and terrorists. The United Kingdom, France, the United States, Germany, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland are just some examples. In fact, we have done a survey of analogous legal provisions in other western liberal democracies, and so far we've identified only one that I'm aware of that does not have analogous provisions, and that is Portugal.

What Mr. Shory is proposing—and what I'm proposing as well in terms of amendments—would actually bring Canadian law into line with the overwhelming legal norm in the democratic world, and indeed with Canadian law prior to amendments to the Citizenship Act in 1977.

Individuals who are convicted of a terrorist crime in Canada or abroad should be deemed, in my view, through their own choices and actions—I repeat, through their choices and their actions—to have renounced their Canadian citizenship. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of examples for why these amendments are necessary.

I share the anger felt by Canadians at the recent discovery that a Canadian citizen is alleged to have been involved in the Hezbollah mass murder in Bulgaria. We believe this individual also has Lebanese citizenship. This is a man who came to Canada as a permanent resident, but about three years later he became a Canadian citizen and returned to Lebanon as a young man and has lived outside of Canada since that time.

Just a few days ago, as you know, media reports confirmed that one of the suspects in the horrendous terrorist attacks in Algeria recently was also a Canadian citizen.

Canadians are understandably outraged that someone would commit violent acts using our passport. If the allegations are true, these terrorists clearly have no sense of loyalty or commitment to our country. They have taken up arms and targeted innocent civilians on behalf of organizations that are proscribed illegal terrorist entities under Canadian law. Canada is an enemy of terrorism in general and certain terrorist organizations in particular, like Hezbollah, and to take up arms on their behalf, it seems to me, clearly constitutes a renunciation of the loyalty upon which our shared citizenship is predicated.

I'd also like to point out to colleagues that the vast majority of Canadians appear to agree with this premise. In fact, a live-caller poll conducted by Canadians last November indicated that 83% of Canadians strongly support the idea of revocation of citizenship from those convicted of terrorism or treason, as opposed to a small fraction who disagreed. This shows overwhelming public support for this notion.

I would also urge the committee to consider amending the bill to restore its application to dual citizens who are convicted of high treason. As was the case prior to 1977, I would urge the committee to consider amendments to ensure the bill would apply to someone who serves as a member of the armed forces of a country that is engaged in armed conflict with Canada. Given the recent examples I mentioned, I would also urge that it cover anyone who serves as a member of an organized armed group in armed conflict with Canada.

In Britain, for example, the government may revoke citizenship on very broad grounds if doing so is deemed to be “conducive to the public good”. In Switzerland citizens may lose their citizenship if they act in a way that causes serious prejudice to the national interest of the country. These examples are much broader than what I am proposing. The circumstances for deemed renunciation would be much more limited and much more clearly defined.

To be clear, if Bill C-425 is passed, there would be no change to processes currently applied in renunciation of Canadian citizenship cases. Appropriate legal safeguards would, of course, be in place. Notice would be given to the affected individual and due process would also be available, and any decision to take away one's citizenship would be reviewable by the courts.

The oath of citizenship and indeed this legislation reflect the idea that citizenship is founded upon the premise of reciprocal loyalty. If one violently renounces that reciprocal loyalty, we should consider that a renunciation of their citizenship. If citizens are convicted of serious terrorist offences, if they take up arms against Canada, or if they are convicted of high treason, those individuals have severed the bonds of loyalty that are the basis of their citizenship.

• (0855)

I should also note that these proposals do not distinguish between whether people with multiple nationalities were born in Canada or if they are naturalized citizens.

I do not anticipate that these provisions would impact many individuals. But their passage would deliver a strong message that Canadian citizenship is not a flag of convenience to be waved whenever it serves people's interest, particularly when they're committing some of the most terrible crimes conceivable.

Thank you very much, Chairman, for your attention. I'm happy to take any questions.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Weston has some questions of you.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

It occurs to me, given your Jesuit training, whether you were trained at a Jesuit school or as a lawyer, you are always looking at balancing and looking at the other side of the story. As I'm listening to what you say about Canada being the most wonderful place on earth—and I agree with that—I think perhaps citizenship is the warp and the weave of Canadianness. So you have a very important responsibility as minister for citizenship.

Critics have said that citizenship is an inalienable right. The other side of this story is that perhaps once you have that inalienable right you ought not to ever be put in a position to give it up. How would you respond to that, Minister?

• (0900)

Hon. Jason Kenney: First of all, the assertion that citizenship is inalienable is factually inaccurate. Citizenship is alienable under our current law; it always has been. If a naturalized citizen is found to have obtained citizenship through fraudulent means, we have the power and the obligation, I would argue, under the Citizenship Act to commence revocation proceedings, as we have done in many cases against such individuals.

Furthermore, individuals can alienate their citizenship of their own volition by making an application for renunciation. What Mr. Shory's bill proposes to do is to essentially expand the grounds for renunciation to a deemed renunciation based on people's actions. Here's the idea. We ought not to be narrow and legalistic about the process of renunciation of citizenship. If individuals go out and voluntarily take up citizenship in a country that is at war with Canada, for example, and they go and commit acts of war against Canada, we ought not to be so legalistic as to wait patiently for them to sign a form renouncing their citizenship. We ought to read in their

actions the renunciation of their loyalty to Canada and indeed their citizenship. That's the premise here.

So, yes, citizenship is alienable, it always has been, it is in every other country, and those who suggest it's inalienable are creating a myth, frankly.

Mr. John Weston: I was actually struck by your allusion to the Kamloops Kid. My father was a prisoner of war of the Japanese in the Far East, and that story really rings true. On the other side, we apologized to Japanese Canadians who were unfairly treated. They were citizens who lost their assets during World War II, and yet the Kamloops Kid basically did something that we would say was inconsistent with his citizenship. So it's a very interesting—

Hon. Jason Kenney: I should say that in Canadian law, until fairly recently, capital punishment was for the crime of high treason, as it is in many other countries. That was certainly the case in 1947 when the Kamloops Kid, Mr. Inouye, was executed for, effectively, high treason.

Mr. John Weston: You mentioned the term, “passport of convenience”. How useful is a Canadian passport for someone who is a terrorist, who wants to travel freely among nations? How useful is it?

Hon. Jason Kenney: It's extremely useful. What I have learned from intelligence briefings and from information in the public domain, media commentary, is that the Canadian passport is considered a high-value passport for terrorist operators because of the credibility of Canada and the Canadian passport. So we ought not to be naive. Now, of course, sometimes people obtain fraudulent passports, people who are not Canadian citizens. But we cannot exclude the possibility that people will on some occasions seek to obtain Canadian citizenship or use their Canadian citizenship precisely so they can move around the world raising fewer eyebrows and attracting less scrutiny in the service of terrorist organizations.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Does that mean it's easier to enter a number of countries with a Canadian passport?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes. I think that intelligence agencies agree unanimously that the Canadian passport is very valuable in these kinds of operations. That is why we have enhanced the security of the Canadian passport and why we have to strengthen the Canadian citizenship process.

[English]

Mr. John Weston: Minister, you have been consistent in building the value in Canadian citizenship, in the citizenship guide that you helped to redo and in so many other things.

You just mentioned that it wouldn't affect that many people, but it sends a valuable message. Do you want to elaborate on that point?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes.

It's impossible for us to give a precise estimate of how many people it might affect, in part because that prospectively is a hypothetical question. But retrospectively, it would be a small number of people.

I just mentioned in my presentation the only two cases I'm aware of in the past couple of years that would seem to be immediately relevant to these provisions. That's the case of the Hezbollah member from Lebanon who is a Canadian citizen and the case of this individual linked to al-Qaeda who was involved in terrorist acts in Algeria.

We are talking about small numbers. Certainly I cannot see this affecting anything more than single digits. But I think the principle is hugely important, which is why virtually every single other western liberal democracy has a similar provision in their law. If you violently express your disloyalty to Canada, we should take that for what it is. We shouldn't be legalistic and wait for you to sign a form to renounce your citizenship if you have gone out and killed Canadian civilians, for example, in the service of a banned terrorist organization or another state whose citizenship you may carry.

● (0905)

Mr. John Weston: Thank you, Minister, for your very full answers.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Groguhé.

[*Translation*]

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

Minister, thank you for joining us today. Your being here is clearly important because the visit of the member for Calgary Northeast has left us with far more questions than answers with regard to Bill C-425.

Certain notions are still fairly ambiguous, as is the application of the whole bill, especially when it comes to the risk of individuals becoming stateless. In addition, the number of people who will be affected by the bill is very small. The Canadian Forces' representatives who testified told us that the legislation would affect about a dozen individuals annually.

Minister, I would also like to ask you about the amendments you mentioned you would like to propose. When will you introduce a concrete amendment proposal, so that the committee can examine it as quickly as possible?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I am not a member of the committee, but I believe the amendment will be proposed during the clause-by-clause study of the bill. I have been working with the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Dykstra, on some potential amendments.

Among other things, I suggested amendments to specify the following.

Individuals who were members of a country's armed forces or members of organized armed groups that were engaged in armed conflict with Canada. Individuals who have been convicted of high treason under section 47 of the Criminal Code, or individuals who have been sentenced to five or more years of imprisonment for

offences related to terrorism under part 2.1 of the Criminal Code. I talked about equivalent terrorism offences abroad where individuals were convicted of offences under sections 73 to 76 of the National Defence Act and were sentenced to life imprisonment for committing acts of treason. There are individuals who were convicted of offences under section 67 of the National Defence Act and were sentenced to life imprisonment. There are also individuals who were convicted of offences under section 130 of the National Defence Act for committing acts of high treason under section 47 of the Criminal Code—or for committing an offence related to terrorism, as defined in section 2 of the Criminal Code—and were sentenced to five or more years of imprisonment.

That's what I propose as far as amendments go. Those are the goals we mean to pursue when it comes to amendments to the bill. It will be the responsibility of the Parliamentary Secretary to propose those amendments using legal and technical language.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Minister, I hope that those amendments will come before the committee fairly early, so that witnesses can also give us their advice and we can examine the amendments properly. So, Mr. Dykstra, I think you should keep us posted.

Will the individuals affected by Bill C-425 be informed of any processes undertaken pursuant to that piece of legislation? What kinds of mechanisms will be provided to ensure that those people are kept informed? If they want to challenge a decision, what mechanisms can they use to formulate a challenge?

Hon. Jason Kenney: If the minister deems that an individual has committed an act that justifies the revocation of their citizenship, he could submit a request to the Citizenship Court. That way, the individual could make a submission to a citizenship judge, who would consider it before rendering a decision regarding the minister's request.

If a citizenship judge decides to accept the minister's request for revocation, he could submit an application for leave to the Federal Court.

● (0910)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Thank you for the answer.

[*English*]

We know that Bill C-425 is an attempt to fast-track access to citizenship for those few people who have permanent resident status and who serve the Canadian armed forces. We learned last day that's 15 people per year in fact. At the same time, we are also quite aware that the backlogs to access citizenship are increasing. We learned a few weeks ago that there's been a 73% drop in the number of permanent residents receiving Canadian citizenship, and you yourself, Minister, acknowledge that this is happening largely because there are fewer people working for you to process those very applications.

The Chair: A point of order.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): I'm wondering where this is going, because this bill talks about revocation or renunciation of citizenship due to a specific—

Mr. Philip Toone: I'll be getting to the question.

Ms. Roxanne James: As long as it's not a question regarding citizenship processing times, because that's really irrelevant at this point on this particular bill.

Mr. Philip Toone: If I could speak to the point of order, then, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Okay. I'll put this on the point of order.

Mr. Philip Toone: Bill C-425 is a bill that speaks to accelerating access to citizenship, so I think wait times are quite pertinent. The question I was going to ask was simply—

The Chair: I think you're getting away from the bill. It's a nice opportunity to talk to the minister about wait times, but I don't think at this particular time this is a forum to talk about wait times. We're here to talk about the revocation or—what's the word—renunciation of citizenship.

Mr. Philip Toone: The bill is in fact about accessing citizenship.

The Chair: I'm not going to argue with you. I'm simply going to tell you that you're out of order. Please refer to the bill when you're asking your questions. Wait times are completely irrelevant.

Mr. Philip Toone: Bill C-425 is an attempt to fast track access to citizenship to about 15—

The Chair: Sir, you and I aren't going to argue. I'm going to start the clock again, right now.

Mr. Philip Toone: Very good.

Bill C-425 seems to be making a hollow promise to those residents making applications. I'd like the minister, if you could, to speak to the question of whether this bill is an attempt to deal with mismanagement in the department. It's possible that people who are trying to access citizenship need this bill in order to break through that backlog.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chairman, the answer is no. We receive well over 200,000 citizenship applications a year. I think the total number of people who might either benefit from this bill, in terms of accelerated treatment, or face renunciation would probably be less than 100 here. We're talking about a tiny fraction of the overall volume of citizenship applicants.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lamoureux.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do find it somewhat surprising, probably not really surprising, that Mr. Minister, you find the time to be able to come to committee to make a presentation on this bill, but it has been quite difficult to get you to appear before supply to talk about the estimates.

Having said that, I would like to ask questions in regard to this. You're proposing to bring forward amendments to the legislation. I think going through the normal process, as the Minister of

Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, you have the opportunity to bring in your own legislation.

Here we have a private member's bill. In a private member's bill, such as we're dealing with today, there are a lot of restrictions in terms of the abilities of members of Parliament to be able to contribute to the debate. In fact, the number of witnesses who are being called to present on this particular bill is limited because it is a private member's bill.

It seems to me that you're trying to deny members of Parliament the opportunity to get fully engaged in what it is you are proposing as a minister of the government, and it just seems to be rather odd and unfair, and many would argue ultimately undemocratic, that you're not being respectful of the House, when in fact the types of changes you're talking about will have fairly significant, even though symbolic.... And that's really what it is, because when you talk about the amendments you're proposing, even though we haven't seen them yet...we're expected to see these amendments and then it will pass because you have a majority on the committee, and then it will go in for third reading and report stage. There will be no real debate on it and then it will be passed, as opposed to the minister bringing forward his own legislation and it coming in to second reading, where every member of Parliament, not limited to two hours, is afforded the opportunity to express their thoughts about the renunciation of citizenship. This is something that I believe a good number of MPs would like to be able to talk about.

So you're hijacking a private member's bill in order to—

• (0915)

The Chair: Stop the clock. A point of order, please.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Yes, thank you, Chair.

I understand that members of the opposition like to question the minister while he's here on issues that are unrelated to the bill. I would point out that you chaired a subcommittee meeting, a steering committee meeting, in which we laid out the process by which this bill was going to move forward, and we gave consideration to this and duly passed it. Included in that calendar of events is the opportunity leading up to clause-by-clause for any member of this committee to introduce amendments to the bill.

It has not been the practice in the four and a half years I've sat on this committee that individuals have in fact moved these amendments two to three to four weeks prior to that opportunity. We are actually talking about potential amendments to the bill. There is a time for those amendments to be introduced, and if any member of this committee, from the government side or from the opposition side, wishes to introduce amendments, they will. There will be an opportunity to debate those amendments.

So I'm not sure why we have a question to the minister related to a process that we have here at committee, when in fact he could use his time I think to ask the minister points related directly to the content of the bill and the presentation he made this morning, which makes evidence to a number of changes—

The Chair: Okay, I've got your point, Mr. Dykstra.

Do you have a response, Mr. Lamoureux?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

I could have sworn that I heard the minister indicate that he does have amendments. I do believe he even scrummed with the media indicating that he plans on bringing forward amendments, albeit through the back door, using you as the parliamentary secretary.

The Chair: I don't want to talk about this any more.

Mr. Lamoureux, it's your dime and you can pretty well talk about almost anything you like, so I don't think you're out of order. I've learned that the minister is perfectly capable of defending himself, but you are getting rather antagonistic with him and I don't like that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Periodically I have been accused of that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You be good, Mr. Lamoureux.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I'll be on good behaviour. I'm sure you can understand the frustration, in the sense that I think this is an important issue. All we know is that the minister is talking about amendments. We haven't even seen the amendments, and we don't know the context, other than a few statements he made. Ultimately, we believe there's a due process for a minister to follow.

My question to the minister is, why have you chosen to hijack Mr. Shory's bill and bring in amendments through the back door, as opposed to, as a minister of the crown, bringing in your own legislation? We would be afforded the due process that would have enabled us to have a healthy second reading and more witnesses.

I could talk about the war brides, the citizenship, Don Chapman, individuals of that nature. There's a lot of interest in citizenship and in renouncing one's citizenship. There is a high level of interest. Why didn't you do it through the normal process as every other minister has?

• (0920)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chairman, I reject the premise of this loaded and inaccurate question.

I don't write the Standing Orders that outline the manner in which private members legislation is considered by the houses of Parliament or by standing committees. I was invited to come and appear before the committee and provide the government's perspective on the bill, which I've done. I have outlined various areas in which we think the bill can be improved, and I'm being very transparent about that.

If the member objects to the introduction of the bill, he should take that up with its sponsor, Mr. Shory, who is with us. This is not a government bill; it's a private member's bill, and we've made a good faith effort to suggest ways in which it could be improved.

Mr. Lamoureux should know that when members frame a private member's bill they don't have the benefit of drawing on the enormous policy expertise that exists in departments. Often, when departments review bills, they see lacunae, or unintended consequences, that could be addressed through amendments, and that's precisely what I'm doing through my presence here today.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Menegakis.

[*Translation*]

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

Minister, thank you for your testimony this morning.

Minister, if an individual is deemed to have renounced his or her citizenship, will they be able to reapply at a later date? If so, how long afterwards?

Hon. Jason Kenney: How long after what?

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: If someone renounces their citizenship, can they reapply for it? And how long—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jason Kenney: A permanent moratorium is imposed on individuals whose citizenship has been revoked. Those people cannot reapply. So the decision is final.

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: You mentioned that there are several other countries that strip citizenship for treason or terrorism or other reasons. In fact, Canada seems to be a bit of an anomaly for not having these provisions in place. Can you expand a bit on the practices in other countries? Are they more strict or more arbitrary than what we have in Canada?

Hon. Jason Kenney: They're much wider. I've mentioned some of the countries that we've looked at. In Australia, for example, the minister may revoke citizenship if it would be contrary to the public interest for the person to remain an Australian citizen. That's based on the minister's opinion. It's a very broad discretion. In the United States they can pursue revocation for a conviction of high treason, or for being a member of an armed force at war with the United States.

In the United Kingdom an individual may be deprived of citizenship if it is "conducive to the public good". There have been a number of recent cases where the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom, based on an amendment that had been adopted by Parliament under the previous Labour government, revoked citizenship because it was conducive to the public good. They did this to people who had been advocating violent extremism in the United Kingdom but who had not been convicted of the kind of serious terrorist defences that we are proposing.

New Zealand may deprive an individual of citizenship if the person has acted in a manner contrary to the interests of New Zealand.

These are just some examples of our closest peer countries, common law countries, that like Canada are great champions of human rights. All of them have in their respective citizenship laws much broader grounds for deprivation of citizenship than what we are proposing.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, there seems to be some misunderstanding as to who this bill would impact, especially after the suggestion was made by you to strip the citizenship of dual nationals who commit terrorist acts. Some people seem to think that it would apply only to foreign-born Canadian citizens. Can you clarify that? Would it apply to everyone, regardless of whether they were born here or naturalized into the country?

Hon. Jason Kenney: In fact, I think the most frequent criticism that I've seen in public commentary against Mr. Shory's bill and suggested amendments is the idea that the bill somehow creates two-tier citizenship, one for naturalized Canadians and another for those who obtain their citizenship through birth on Canadian soil. This is a complete misunderstanding.

The bill, either as drafted or as potentially amended, would apply equally without respect to whether people are born in Canada or were naturalized as Canadians by immigrating here. But there is a limitation because of our obligations under the international Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, which we ratified in 1978, which convention does not allow acceding states to take an action that would result in someone becoming stateless. That's a legal limitation we have.

In principle, I would prefer for us to be able to deprive traitors and terrorists of citizenship regardless of whether or not they are dual citizens, but we cannot take that step, based on the legal advice I have, because of our obligations under the convention.

But you could be born in Canada and inherit citizenship from your parents, or you could go out and become naturalized in a second, third, or fourth country, or multiple countries, or you could immigrate to Canada, having retained the citizenship of your country of origin, or you could immigrate to Canada and renounce that original citizenship and go out and seek citizenship in a third country. So the notion that this is discriminatory vis-à-vis naturalized Canadians is completely inaccurate.

● (0925)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

I know you touched on this a little earlier, Minister, but critics of this bill claim that Canadian citizenship is an inalienable right. Could you respond to that one more time? I just want to get clarification on that.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Citizenship is alienable. It always has been alienable. It is alienable in every other democracy. It is alienable based on the volition of the citizen. They can choose to renounce their citizenship. It is also alienable based on an initiative of the government under enumerated grounds, those enumerated in the Citizenship Act.

Under the current act, the enumerated grounds are essentially if the citizenship was obtained through the commission of fraud, but prior to 1977 another enumerated ground for revocation was an act such as acts of high treason or acts of war against Canada.

It is alienable. It always has been alienable. That only makes sense, since it is predicated, as I say, on a reciprocal loyalty.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Chow, please.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): For the 15 soldiers overseas, some of them might be born outside Canada and have children who also might become soldiers and have children who are born outside Canada. Like 2.8 million Canadians living abroad, any children who are born to a second generation—kids like myself, Canadians—will not have citizenship, because the Citizenship Act has a flaw in it: a second-generation cut-off, whether it's diplomats, soldiers, ordinary Canadians, or adopted kids. If I adopt a kid and the kid comes in as a Canadian citizen, and if their kid then happens to be born abroad, their kid wouldn't have citizenship.

While fast-tracking soldiers' citizenship sounds great, what about their kids and their grandchildren? They can't be citizens. They would be stateless.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Just to clarify, Ms. Chow, are you talking about the second generation, the two generations born abroad rule that was adopted in 2008?

Ms. Olivia Chow: That's right.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Okay.

Ms. Olivia Chow: So for these soldiers, while we fast-track them, what will happen to their children? Is this not something we could also fix?

Hon. Jason Kenney: To answer the question, Mr. Chairman, I would say that whether they are soldiers who are able to accelerate the acquisition of their citizenship or not, if their children were born in Canada they will immediately obtain Canadian citizenship. If the children were born abroad and one of the two parents is a Canadian citizen, they have Canadian citizenship. And indeed, they just need one of their four grandparents—no, it's just the parents; it's two generations.

This was a provision adopted unanimously by Parliament in both houses, all parties, all members, in 2008. I don't see this as a matter of contention.

There have been some suggestions that we ought to amend the Citizenship Act to make an exception to the two-generation born-abroad rule for crown servants. Indeed, I proposed such an amendment in the last Parliament and I intend to bring that amendment forward again.

● (0930)

Ms. Olivia Chow: Thank you.

On the whole notion of who should have their citizenship rights taken out, your suggestion is dual citizenship. As I said, there are 2.8 million Canadians who live abroad half the time, or some time, and they travel back and forth. Some of them take out dual citizenship so that it's easier to do business in that country. In the case of my mother-in-law, she travels in the south, so she took out U.S. citizenship recently because of the hassle at the border. Why would you want to discourage people from taking dual citizenship?

I hope it never happens to people, but some countries force people to get into the army. Some countries take teenagers and force them to become child soldiers. In those cases, those people could be Canadian but may have dual citizenship and are forced to become soldiers in that country. Is that then an act of treason, an act of war? What will happen to these Canadians?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Unless your mother-in-law is planning to blow up a school bus or join a foreign army at war with Canada, she has nothing to worry about, Ms. Chow. So I really don't think this is going to discourage people from becoming dual citizens.

Ms. Olivia Chow: She is 86 and not about to do any of that.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I would also point out that the minister would retain discretion not to pursue application for deemed renunciation for individuals, for example, where they have been compelled to do something against their own volition.

There is an analogous provision in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, as you know, which says that a serious criminal conviction in a foreign country is not considered grounds for inadmissibility if that would not also be a crime in Canada. That is to say, we will look at the actual conditions, the actual circumstances of a conviction for terrorism abroad or an act of war against Canada abroad, and if it's clear, for example, that the person was not culpable or that it was a trumped-up charge, then we would not use that as grounds for deemed renunciation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Your time has expired, Ms. Chow.

Ms. James, you're next.

But I have a brief question to ask either you, Mr. Minister, or Mr. Stevens. It has to do with the issue of whether or not we're creating two classes of citizens, which we may already have. I think it was Orwell who said all men are created equal but some men are more equal than others.

If you are convicted under clause 2 of this bill, if it passes and the committee cleans up the wording, "act of war"...if you are a naturalized citizen and you're convicted of the different charges that could happen, you would go to jail and you would serve your time and then you'd come out. If you have dual citizenship by whatever means—either you have applied for it or by some other means—you go to jail and then we kick you out of the country.

The question to you, Minister or Mr. Stevens, is whether that creates two classes of citizens. The same argument could apply for clause 1, I suppose. If we are creating two classes of citizens, does that violate the charter or something else, again referring to the Orwell statement—or whoever said it—that all men are created equal, but in this bill all men aren't all created equal.

• (0935)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chairman, again, all citizens would be treated equally under this bill regardless of whether they were born in Canada or born abroad, regardless of whether their citizenship was obtained by birth on Canadian soil or through naturalization. There is, however, a limitation in the application of that as an operation of the accession to the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. As I said, in principle I would be happy for this to apply to

people who are not dual or multiple nationals, but I'm advised we don't have the capacity to do that legally.

Again, I don't think this is a problem in theory or in practice. It wasn't a problem in Canadian law before. It's not a problem in the other western democracies. I'm not aware of this being an issue.

Do you want to complement that, Mr. Stevens? He was asking you as well.

Mr. Eric Stevens: Yes. I would say that in terms of the charter, the section that would be relevant to think about is section 15, but under section 15 we know that not all distinctions constitute discrimination. What's very important here is the reason why the distinction is being made. That is in law we have a self-imposed restriction by having signed the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

The Chair: Okay. We'll see how things progress.

Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to our committee, Minister.

In your opening remarks you mentioned a couple of incidents of late with regard to people who held Canadian citizenship and who have participated in terrorist acts abroad. You mentioned one case in Bulgaria, and the second one, which was most recently in the news, in Algeria, and the fact—I think it was just this week—a Canadian was identified through fingerprints as being part of that attack. So it is a problem.

I'm from Toronto. Scarborough Centre is my riding, home of the Toronto 18. It's an issue I and my constituents are very concerned about. Do you think radicalization of Canadian citizens is a growing problem here in Canada? Over the last number of years I think we've heard about it more and more.

Thank you.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'm not an expert on intelligence about domestic radicalization, but I think anyone could observe that there's a higher incidence of such radicalization now than there was, for example, 30 or 40 years ago. This certainly is a challenge for many western countries.

The typical profile that's been developed by intelligence agencies with respect to the recruits targeted by terrorist organizations is that they were born in western society and are typically adolescent males who are looking for some kind of identity, who are perhaps going through very typical adolescent angst, and who are recruited initially by finding websites and material on the Internet that helps to give a comprehensive world view that leads them to a nihilistic extremism. Often after that they're connected through local discussion boards on the Internet. They eventually start finding people in what may constitute an informal cell—I think this pretty much typifies what happened with the Toronto 18—and then those people may start meeting and training and moving to action.

Our intelligence and police agencies are extremely vigilant. We should be very grateful, as Canadians. Sometimes we take this stuff for granted. Sometimes we don't think it's really serious. Sometimes the coverage of the Toronto 18 is that they were just a bunch of kids who were fooling around. That is ridiculous. The evidence is clear that they had the clear intention, a potential capability, of obtaining large-scale explosives to kill hundreds of Canadian civilians. We should not be naive about this threat that exists in our society or in other western societies.

• (0940)

Ms. Roxanne James: Because I'm on this committee, a lot of what I do in my particular riding of Scarborough Centre is talk to constituents about our policies on immigration. I hear time and time again....

In a round table very diverse in ethnicity, with representation from multiple groups across Canada, the common thread was that people who come to Canada should integrate into Canadian society.

Do you think there's any correlation or connection between those who might be more easily drawn into a terrorist group or a terrorist cell here in Canada and those who have not integrated economically or socially into Canadian society, in our fabric here?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I think it's self-evident that someone who wants to launch war or acts of violence against Canada as their host country is not well integrated.

There is some evidence suggesting that there is a limited linkage between a lack of economic integration and a lack of social and cultural integration, which can sometimes be the breeding ground for radicalization. A point I always make is that we have a strong interest in ensuring real equality of economic opportunity for newcomers to Canada.

But I don't think we should overstate that. Many of the so-called homegrown terrorists in western societies were actually highly educated individuals. Think of the bombings in London and at the Glasgow airport several years ago that were committed by medical doctors trained in the United Kingdom. Many of the people involved in 9/11 had the benefit of professional graduate and postgraduate educations and professions in western countries. So this is not a function of poverty; it's a choice people make.

In terms of the broad support for integration, and more specifically the premise of Mr. Shory's bill, I'd like to reiterate that based on an NRG live-caller survey of 1,000 people in October last year, 83% expressed support for the principle that citizens found guilty of committing acts of treason against Canada should be stripped of their citizenship, as opposed to 12.9% who were opposed. Sixty-one percent strongly supported the measure, as opposed to 5.6% who were strongly opposed.

The Chair: We have to move on.

Mr. Opitz, go ahead.

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

Minister, thank you for being here today. I'd like to thank Mr. Shory for his bill, because those people who do serve in the Canadian Forces and who step up as permanent residents to serve this country I think are deserving of that additional consideration,

because of the risks they are prepared to take on behalf of all Canadians.

You're absolutely right, Minister. There's a distinction between wilful and somebody being coerced into a particular act. I think common sense in the law and in the courts would discern that fairly quickly. It's the wilful acts we're talking about here.

Last year in the GTA, approximately 20 or so individuals were radicalized and are known to have left Canada to join terrorist groups abroad. Their actions will be taken against not only our allies but against Canadian Forces personnel, diplomats, and others across the world, contrary to Canadian interests.

A lot of this is something already written into the citizenship guide, because what was there previously was inadequate. What you have written into the citizenship guide now defines what is expected of people in this country, that they should simply not break any of our laws, they should adjust to Canada, and they should follow the tenets of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. I don't think it's too much to ask somebody to simply be a law-abiding Canadian citizen.

Thank you for everything you have done on that so far, and I look forward to those amendments.

Sir, I'd like to talk about act of war. You mentioned in your comments earlier that the act of war is not clearly defined in international law.

Could you please elaborate on that point—between the act of war and armed aggression or armed conflict?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'd like one of my officials to comment on that.

Mr. Eric Stevens: I understand the committee has already heard from officials at the last meeting on this subject.

"Act of war" is a term we do not see very commonly in Canadian statutes. It seems we have moved to be more speaking about hostilities or armed conflict. Canada hasn't declared war against a country for decades. It's a term that's fallen out of favour, I would say. As a result, we have ambiguity.

It's worthwhile for the committee to think about whether there would be something more precise. Then everyone would know what the law is on the subject.

• (0945)

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'd just make a supplementary comment, which is that there is a government bill before the House, Bill S-7, which is being moved by Minister Nicholson. It would make it an offence under the terrorist offences act to leave Canada in order to join a prescribed terrorist entity. These young fellows leaving Canada to join al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah would run afoul of that bill should it pass into law.

The Chair: Our time has expired, Mr. Opitz.

Obviously that issue, the act of war, did trouble the last day. Mr. Opitz asked the question.

Are there any other additional comments on how we can fix that up?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Well, that is the....

The Chair: You made some initial comments, and I appreciate that. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes. I did read in French, in response to Madame Grogue's question, the suggested basis of prospective amendments that would address this problem, which would propose that the act would apply to those who've served as a member of an armed forces of a country or as a member of an organized armed group that was engaged in an armed conflict with Canada; or have been convicted of high treason under section 47 of the Criminal Code; or have been sentenced to five years or more of imprisonment for terrorism offences, as defined in section 2 of the code, or equivalent foreign offences for terrorism; or have been convicted of offences under sections 73 to 76 of the National Defence Act and sentenced to imprisonment for life because they acted traitorously; or have been convicted of an offence under section 78 of the National Defence Act and sentenced to imprisonment for life; or have been convicted under section 130 of the National Defence Act for committing high treason punishable under section 47 of the Criminal Code or for committing a terrorism offence and it is defined in section 2 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to at least five years in prison.

My apologies to the translators.

The Chair: That gives us something to work with.

Thank you, Mr. Stevens, Ms. Girard, and Mr. Piragoff.

Mr. Minister, thank you for your attendance today and for helping us with this bill.

We will suspend.

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0950)

The Chair: We'll start the second part of our meeting.

We have two witnesses before us. The one witness isn't here, but he will be present shortly.

The first witness is with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Superintendent Joe Oliver is director general of operational prioritization and protective policing, federal policing.

We know someone named Joe Oliver. I recognize that name. He's a minister.

We also have a representative from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Michael Peirce, who is assistant director of intelligence.

Gentlemen, welcome to our committee. We thank you for coming and helping us out with this bill. You each have up to 10 minutes to make a presentation, and then members of the committee will have some questions or statements for you.

Superintendent Oliver, perhaps you could begin. Thank you very much, sir.

Chief Superintendent Joe Oliver (Director General, Operational Prioritization and Protective Policing, Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for inviting me here to speak to Bill C-425, the Honouring the Canadian Armed Forces Act. I appreciate the opportunity to answer your questions about the implications for law enforcement arising from this bill.

[*English*]

As written, Bill C-425 would not directly impact the RCMP's enforcement activities. Our role with respect to Bill C-425 would be to support Citizenship and Immigration Canada where appropriate.

Section 6 of the Security Offences Act gives the RCMP primary responsibility for criminal acts that constitute threats to the security of Canada as defined by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. The RCMP's role is to prevent, detect, deny, and respond to criminal threats to Canada's national security, including acts of terrorism, either in Canada or abroad, if they involve Canadians. The RCMP has responsibility for investigating acts of terrorism, either offences that have already occurred or those that are being planned.

Canada's national security remains a key strategic priority for the RCMP. Radicalization of Canadians to the point where they prepared to engage in extremist violence is a continuing challenge to our society. The RCMP works proactively to counter extremist messaging through our outreach efforts with communities vulnerable to recruitment to extremism across the country.

[*Translation*]

My intention today is to provide a law enforcement perspective on the threat of individuals engaging in terrorist acts, both within Canada and abroad.

[*English*]

Canada is not immune from terrorism, as our recent investigations have shown. Since the Anti-terrorism Act was introduced in 2001, 15 individuals have been convicted of terrorist-related offences in Canada. That's 14 offences under section 2 for terrorism and one for a hoax.

The convictions obtained to date mostly reflect individuals engaging in terrorist acts within Canada, but we are also concerned about individuals who radicalize within Canada and then leave to engage in violent criminal activity.

There is no shortage of instability and conflict in places like Somalia, Syria, and Afghanistan, which provide numerous opportunities for individuals to engage in violent extremist acts. The RCMP has investigated individuals who have become radicalized to the point where they've decided to leave Canada to engage in terrorist activities abroad. We've also seen instances where Canadians have travelled abroad to receive terrorist training that they then used upon their return to Canada. For example, Momin Khawaja was convicted in 2008 for manufacturing an explosive device for a group in the United Kingdom after he had travelled to Pakistan.

In order to prevent one of these individuals from leaving Canada, the police would have to obtain admissible evidence of the individual's intent to engage in terrorist activities. In practice, law enforcement will not always be able to obtain this information before the individual leaves the country. For example, in March 2011 the RCMP laid charges against two individuals suspected of leaving Canada to participate in the activities of a terrorist group. Neither individual has been apprehended.

The RCMP seeks to prevent terrorist activities from occurring whenever possible. From the RCMP's perspective, we would prefer to deal with these individuals before they leave Canada to commit violent acts abroad. However, in cases where law enforcement only learns of an individual's intent to engage in terrorist activities after he has left the country, we would liaise with our international partners to prevent the planned terrorist activities if possible.

Even in cases where law enforcement is unable to prevent the individuals from engaging in terrorist activities abroad, we can still collect evidence and liaise with our international partners in order to support prosecution should the individual return to Canada.

• (0955)

Another bill, S-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Security of Information Act, is currently before the House of Commons. It includes new offences for leaving Canada to commit terrorist activities. The proposed new offences of leaving or attempting to leave Canada to participate in activities of a terrorist group will assist law enforcement in stopping the activities of prospective terrorists at an earlier stage of their preparations, before they leave to join a terrorist training camp or to do harm elsewhere.

[Translation]

Again, thank you for inviting me to participate in this important meeting.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Superintendent Oliver, for your presentation.

Mr. Peirce, if you could address the committee, we would appreciate it.

Mr. Michael Peirce (Assistant Director Intelligence, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good morning. I am pleased to be here to discuss issues relating to private member's Bill C-425.

As I understand it, in its present form Bill C-425 would seek to provide an advanced path to citizenship for permanent residents who are also members of the Canadian Forces. It would also provide a means to remove Canadian citizenship from dual citizens who engage in acts of war against the Canadian Forces.

I am also aware of the comments by Minister Kenney and Mr. Shory, the bill's sponsor, that they intend to introduce amendments to the bill to provide authorities to remove Canadian citizenship from dual citizens convicted of terrorist offences in Canada or abroad.

[Translation]

I would like to be very clear on this point. CSIS is not a law enforcement agency. People convicted of terrorist offences are convicted by a court of law based on evidence gathered for prosecution purposes by law enforcement agencies. While CSIS intelligence may sometimes provide investigative leads to police, it is not typically used in such proceedings.

[English]

Mr. Chair, that being said, in order to provide some context to the committee's study of Bill C-425 and the possible amendments thereto, I'd like to speak to the general terrorism threat environment, especially as it relates to alleged Canadian involvement in terrorist-related activities.

CSIS is currently investigating a number of individuals in Canada on terrorist-related grounds. Their activities range from fundraising and logistical support to terrorist training and operations. As we recently indicated in our public report, these individuals fall into no distinct class, educational, or psychological category. Mr. Chair, there's simply no single terrorist type or mould.

In addition to individuals being investigated for terrorist-related activity in Canada, the spectre of radicalized individuals from Canada being involved in terrorism overseas is a significant concern for the service. Canada has an international obligation to prevent the exporting of terrorism, when and where possible, especially if it involves some of its citizens.

The committee will also be aware of recent reports of alleged Canadian involvement in attacks in Bulgaria and the recent confirmation that the remains of Canadians suspected of involvement in a terrorist attack in Algeria have been located.

As well, the director of CSIS recently stated to the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence that the service is aware of dozens of Canadians who have travelled abroad to engage in terrorism-related activities.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, such cases represent a serious threat to security, both in Canada and abroad, and may adversely affect Canada's international reputation. Canadians involved in terrorist activities abroad could transfer their skills and knowledge to terrorist organizations. They could also bring skills and knowledge acquired abroad back to Canada. They could possibly use that knowledge to conduct terrorist attacks on Canadian soil. This terrorist feedback loop is obviously a concern for us.

[English]

Moreover, individuals returning to Canada from conflict zones abroad have been known to radicalize others. Indeed, because of their adventures overseas, such individuals often gain a large amount of credibility—in the vernacular, they get “street cred”—among some like-minded individuals in groups, particularly impressionable youth.

That being said, Mr. Chair, tracking Canadians who travel abroad to conduct terrorist activities is not an easy task. They often escape into ungoverned spaces such as tribal regions along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, or into conflict zones such as Syria where the situations are fluid and very difficult to navigate.

Mr. Chair, there are significant challenges with constructing a clear picture of foreign fighters and terrorists overseas.

First, it's often difficult for us to ascertain motive. In Syria, for instance, there has been an influx of foreign fighters, some for the Free Syrian Army, some for al-Qaeda-related groups, like the al-Nusra Front, and still others for the al-Assad regime, so differentiating the motives and alliances of individuals can be extremely difficult. I should also point out that we see movement at times. An individual may go over and begin activities with the Free Syrian Army and move over and end up fighting for or with the al-Nusra Front, for example. It's very difficult to track.

Second, investigations of individuals who have travelled overseas are particularly challenging because corroborating and finding reputable sources overseas and reporting takes time. During that time, individuals may move, and they may move into other locations where it's very difficult to track them, so time is a significant factor.

Third, confirming the identities of Canadians overseas is notoriously difficult and is sometimes impossible. Often, we must rely upon foreign intelligence agencies that may have other priorities, different resources, and different mandates.

Mr. Chair, despite these challenges, I'd like to underline that the service works extremely hard to provide as accurate a picture to the government as we can on this and many other threats related to national security.

Let me bring some international context to this discussion. Canada is not the only country dealing with radicalized citizens travelling abroad to engage in terrorism. Countries such as Australia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all experienced this problem to some degree, in many instances to some significant degree.

[Translation]

In fact, just last week, the Dutch government raised the terrorist threat level in the Netherlands from “limited” to “substantial” because radicalized Dutch youth travelled to Syria to engage in violent armed jihad.

I thought I'd bring this fact to the committee's attention, lest there be any perception that Canada is somehow an outlier among our allies. We are not. Many western nations are facing a similar threat, which will likely continue for some time.

• (1005)

[English]

This is an international problem.

On that note, I'd like to thank you for your attention. I welcome questions from members.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Peirce and Superintendent Oliver. We will have some questions of you, starting with Mr. Leung.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for appearing.

Canada is a very successful multicultural society. We're also a very diverse society, and we have a very active immigration policy.

As an immigrant myself, I must admit that prior to becoming a Canadian citizen, I travelled on the passport of the Republic of China. In the 1960s and 1970s I was *persona non grata*, I'll say. There were only something like 31 countries around the world that recognized that particular country, and I had extreme difficulty in travelling anywhere for either a conference or academics, or just for leisure.

Since becoming a Canadian citizen, I have viewed the Canadian passport as something that is very valuable and very dear to me.

I wish to hear your comments on how others, such as these radicals, these extremists, are using the Canadian passport as a tool for their own self-fulfillment, or as a tool for ease of entry into various countries around the world in order to engage in terrorist activity, or if they sometimes are using the convenience of the Canadian passport to ease entry for spying purposes.

What I'd like you to share with me perhaps is where the Canadian passport sits in terms of ranking, in terms of how well we are seen internationally when one travels with a Canadian passport as a document.

Mr. Michael Peirce: I'll start, and if Chief Superintendent Oliver wants to comment, he can follow up.

The Canadian passport, as you've described it, is an extremely valuable document for anyone travelling. As a result, it is subject to use and abuse in a limited number of circumstances by a small group of people who would seek to use it to facilitate terrorist movement and terrorist activity. We certainly see intelligence reporting that suggests that individuals actively seek the Canadian passport for those purposes.

Individuals may come to Canada and attain dual citizenship to gain the Canadian passport so that they can subsequently travel under that passport. We also see the active use of the passport with individuals who travel overseas. It makes it extremely difficult to track, because the vast majority of people, of course, travelling on a Canadian passport are travelling for good and legitimate reasons. So it's not immediately subject to question.

We see certain terrorist organizations in particular target the use of the Canadian passport because of its value, because it facilitates travel so easily and so smoothly. They will seek out dual nationals for the purpose of using that passport to facilitate travel. We've seen at least some indications of that in regard to Hezbollah, for instance.

So that document is an extremely valuable document, and gaining citizenship in order to be able to use that document is a noted goal.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Thank you.

Mr. Oliver, do you have a comment? No.

Then let me ask the next question. It's somewhat related. In May 2000, CSIS issued a report entitled "International Terrorism: The Threat to Canada". In this report it was found that Canada is signing a dozen international conventions combatting terrorism. Yet Canada has been a frequent destination for international terrorism and their supporters. Recently, CBC obtained a report entitled "The Threat Environment to 2025" report.

What do these reports find? Perhaps you can share with us. What is the shift that has happened in the post-September 2001 era to the present? How are we addressing that issue of having better control over using Canada as a convenient place for training, for radicalization, and our citizenship and our passport as a travel document for these radicals?

• (1010)

Mr. Michael Peirce: I think we will be able to tag team on this one.

Certainly, we have seen in the post 9/11 environment that the al-Qaeda narrative has become more popular, and al-Qaeda itself took significant steps to propagate that narrative, resulting in increased threat. We've seen that for the past number of years. As a result, CSIS has actively expanded its counter-terrorism capacity in order to be able to identify and track individuals. CSIS has, within Canada, upped its game on the counter-terrorism level, and in addition to the pure investigative role, it has upped its game in regard to an understanding and appreciation of radicalization. One of the biggest issues is individuals who are radicalized in Canada, who become a threat to conduct violent extremist activity, and who may travel.

In addition, CSIS has expanded its international footprint because of the numbers of individuals who travel and the threat that arises with their travel. It's a threat to Canada's reputation. As I outlined in my opening remarks, it's a threat because it brings overseas the threat to Canadian interests, and it also facilitates others engaging in threat-related activity against Canadians.

In general, the response is that we've upped our game very significantly on counter-terrorism, on tracking, and on the study and understanding of radicalization. There's no question that the threat has changed over the last few years. The international terrorist threat has changed. Al-Qaeda and the core leadership of al-Qaeda, for example, have suffered significant losses, and that has disrupted the al-Qaeda core capacity. What we see, though, are related cross-affiliated groups, so groups like—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Peirce.

Ms. Chow.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Superintendent Oliver, how many officers does the RCMP have abroad, overseas, to track down criminals, whether they be child sex offenders, terrorists, or any other kind of criminal?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: The RCMP has approximately 35 liaison officers strategically located globally.

The RCMP in foreign jurisdictions, as my colleague mentioned, must rely on the goodwill and support of the foreign authorities who actually have the law enforcement authority. So when we are operating abroad, it is in the capacity of sharing investigative information. In some cases, it may be through capacity building, where there may be a lack of skills and—

Ms. Olivia Chow: I understand that, but that wasn't my question. It was how many people.

You have 35 officers who are boots on the ground, so to speak, so that you can investigate and say that person is a criminal, a proven sex offender, or a proven suspect of terrorism, and then you can track them down.

C/Supt Joe Oliver: I would clarify that our liaison officers are in post. We also supplement those on a case-by-case basis where there may be an incident that requires additional capacity or specialized investigative capacity. These are cases, for instance, like the Algerian situation that was referenced earlier, where the RCMP deployed specialists to help with identification.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Thank you.

Do you share lists with the CBSA? I know you do in some cases share the suspect lists of terrorists. That's how Maher Arar got sent to Syria for torture. Do you share the children's sex offender registry list, for example, or for people who are suspected of terrorism? Do you not share lists with the CBSA so that people will be warned if they're travelling abroad, or so that CBSA may even be able to stop them from travelling abroad?

• (1015)

C/Supt Joe Oliver: We would share information with the CBSA on a case-by-case basis, with a purpose, an intent, in mind. If we were aware that someone who is wanted may be returning from a foreign jurisdiction, we may inform CBSA. There may be instances where we are concerned about someone leaving Canada, but the CBSA has limited capacity to monitor exits from Canada. In fact, most often we would try to work with our international partners to identify the arrival in a foreign jurisdiction when somebody has departed Canada. There are no exit controls in Canada today, as we speak.

Ms. Olivia Chow: If you have a suspect who has a criminal record and you have that person on a list, do you tell the CBSA that the person is coming back, or do you tell the foreign country, whether that be Pakistan, Cuba or Thailand, that you have a list of criminals who are about to enter their countries and to be aware?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: No, the RCMP does not have a list that we share with countries. The RCMP maintains the criminal record repository for Canada on behalf of the Canadian law enforcement community. There are agreements and arrangements, either through Interpol or with the United States, for instance, and with other domestic federal or municipal law enforcement agencies where they can access this repository to check to see if people have criminal records.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Whether the person has a passport or not, if that person has been convicted as a criminal in the past, or you suspect that person has committed serious crimes and would offend, whether that be children or a country or what have you, would you not then feel it is your responsibility...? What criteria would you use to actually notify that country? Is it what kind of offence it is? And would the passport make any difference, whether the person has citizenship or not? It could be a landed immigrant or citizens or dual citizens. Does that matter? You know that person has been a criminal and may reoffend. Would you not feel it's your responsibility to either tell CBSA or the foreign countries?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: Canadian citizens who have a passport to travel have the right to travel. It is not for the RCMP to monitor and inform others that individuals who may have been convicted and have done their sentence in Canada are now travelling.

There are arrangements that are put in place where if someone is travelling and the foreign country wants to screen against Canada's databases, there is a possibility for that to happen. Canada and the United States, through CPIC and NCIC, have an arrangement that if someone enters the U.S., the U.S. can take the passport information and query against Canada's database to see if the person has a criminal record in Canada. We have a reciprocal agreement with the U.S. that if the RCMP—

Ms. Olivia Chow: Okay, that's with the U.S., but what about other countries? I talked about Cuba, Thailand—

C/Supt Joe Oliver: It's not systematic with other countries. It would normally be done through Interpol, and in those cases it would often involve their notice system if someone is wanted for travelling or they're under surveillance or they are wanted for an offence.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Okay, but would it be useful to have that kind of agreement? The U.S. has 75 boots on the ground in Homeland Security to track down people overseas. Would it not be useful for us to have that kind of agreement with other countries?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: I think it would be useful, if the RCMP is interested in an individual who may not be under surveillance or who we want, to know if they are trying to leave the country or trying to get back into the country, because that would give us the opportunity to take some sort of enforcement action, but unfortunately those systems and authorities don't exist today.

• (1020)

The Chair: I think that concludes your time, Ms. Chow.

You know, Mr. Leung opened all this, and we're really getting off topic with both Mr. Leung and Ms. Chow. I understand there have been hints that we're going to broaden this definition of "act of war" into other things. It's all very interesting, but I just question whether what Mr. Leung and Ms. Chow have been raising is relevant to the bill.

However, we'll see how things go.

Mr. Lamoureux.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Canada today has 14 convicted terrorists. I assume that all 14 are in jail right now?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: We have 15 convicted terrorists.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: We have 15, and they're all in jail?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: That I don't know. I don't look after the disposition. They may be in jail or they may have been released if they've served their sentences.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I think it would be interesting if we as a committee could actually find out where those 15 convicted terrorists are.

Mr. Peirce, you don't know, do you?

Mr. Michael Peirce: No, I don't know the answer to that.

C/Supt Joe Oliver: Correctional Service of Canada would probably be the best authority to secure that information from.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Sure.

I'm wondering if we would have a better world if in fact those individuals were just deported out of Canada, if their citizenship was taken away from them and they were put in some other foreign country. Would we be in a better world if that were the case, do you think?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: That would be very much a question of speculation on my part.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Absolutely. We'd have 15 Canadian terrorists around the world. Hopefully they wouldn't bomb any Canadian embassies or anything of that nature. But the point is, at the end of the day we have 15 convicted terrorists in Canada. We also have dozens of Canadians travelling the world, participating in potential terrorist activities.

Is that correct, Mr. Peirce?

Mr. Michael Peirce: That's correct.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Out of all these terrorists, how many, do you think, have dual citizenship?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: That is information the RCMP does not track.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: When you think of our Canadian citizenship, do you feel there is an apparent double standard? We're saying, in this legislation that we're talking about, that if you have dual citizenship—Mr. Mulcair, the leader of the NDP, has dual citizenship, as do others—you are going to be treated differently if you commit an act of terrorism than will other individuals who don't have Canadian citizenship.

Do you have any thoughts on that at all, or are you allowed to have any thoughts on that that you can share with us?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: I think that's probably a question best addressed to the minister, to CIC, or to the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I'm trying to prove a bit of a point here, that we do have terrorism. There's maybe a need for us to have a healthy debate on the issue, but a lot of time constraints have been put on us.

With regard to the issue of citizenship and fast-tracking it for members of the Canadian Forces, I'm wondering if you feel that this might be a worthy thing to do. One of the thoughts I came across, especially, Mr. Oliver, when I saw you all dressed up in your RCMP attire, was whether the RCMP would oppose that. Does the RCMP have landed immigrants as part of its membership?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: I researched that, because I knew it was possibly going to be a question.

The RCMP Act has provisions similar to those of the National Defence Act, which the commissioner.... The basic criterion is to be a Canadian citizen, but in the case where there are an insufficient number of Canadians to fulfill those roles, non-Canadians could.

Our HR people said we have not run into a situation yet whereby we haven't had a sufficient number of Canadians. So to this point, I'm not aware of anybody in recent history being appointed who was not Canadian.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Our whole complement of RCMP officers is Canadian citizens.

C/Supt Joe Oliver: That is my understanding.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I did not know that. I learned something today about that.

C/Supt Joe Oliver: The members are appointed under the RCMP Act.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Is that right? You threw me off my line of questioning. Now I'm more interested in asking the minister a question.

A voice: And it will now be a better world.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It's already a better world. Well, there you go.

At the end of the day, Mr. Chair, I think I had my questions answered. I appreciate your presentation here this afternoon.

Thank you.

•(1025)

The Chair: I find this committee is never dull.

Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I promise not to apply any thought control.

And by the way, your uniform is spectacular: 4th Battalion Provost—I'm glad you're here—with four battle honours for the RCMP.

Mr. Peirce, when you were speaking to Mr. Leung, you were just getting into discussing affiliated groups. I'd like you to finish that answer, if you wouldn't mind.

Mr. Michael Peirce: Where I was going with those comments is that we have now a more diffuse international threat, because al-Qaeda-related affiliates, such as al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, now are the sites of power and sites of activity, by and large, for al-Qaeda and for carrying out terrorist activities.

This means there's a regional distribution of the threat, and that diffusion, creating a regional distribution, leads to a greater risk of individuals travelling. Now there are a greater number of areas to travel, a greater number of affiliated al-Qaeda organizations to join, and that has increased the risk.

To conclude the answer, we see an increased risk as a result of that diffusion, and an increased risk in particular of Canadians travelling to engage with those organizations.

Mr. Ted Opitz: I appreciate the challenges you have. You're right. The service is not all-seeing and all-knowing. It's hard to know what lurks in people's souls and minds sometimes when they want to get radicalized.

How many people would you estimate were radicalized last year?

Mr. Michael Peirce: It's very difficult to define.

Individuals who are radicalized are not in themselves targets of the service. CSIS is concerned with individuals who develop extremist beliefs, who are at risk of carrying out terrorist-related activity, or who act in support of terrorist-related activity. So radicalization by itself is not the trigger.

The factors that go into radicalization are multi-faceted. As I said in my earlier comments, there is no prototypical terrorist. We see different communities. We see differences between Europe and North America in terms of radicalization. Then you take it to the next step: what are the triggers that could lead to violent extremism?

While we can catalogue some of the indicators, it is what I refer to as a "chaotic system". You cannot predict the moment at which an individual will turn from being radicalized to being ready to engage in violent extremist activity. So you have to investigate their activities to determine where they're at, as opposed to simply profiling on the basis of indicators.

Mr. Ted Opitz: I guess that's where the RCMP and other law enforcement in Canada come in, when we have people who are radicalizing or who you know of through intelligence agencies within police forces.

How do you deal with these guys? You have to keep an eye on them. You have to monitor. What does the RCMP do in this case?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: Consistent with the counter-terrorism strategy, there are several layers of approach. One is with the objective of preventing individuals from becoming radicalized. Part of that is through the national security outreach program the RCMP has, where we engage the community and try to provide a counter-narrative. When there are indications that individuals may be supporting terrorists or are about to participate in terrorist activity themselves, there are a variety of methods the RCMP would use to try to capture the evidence to support a prosecution in Canada and as a result try to prevent an attack or a terrorist event or the supporting of a terrorist group from actually taking place.

We've seen that in cases where.... In fact, in March 2011 the RCMP, in partnership with the Toronto Police Service, learned information about an individual who was planning to leave Canada to participate. That was the belief, and that individual was arrested before departing from Canada.

So there are efforts to prevent even departures from Canada.

• (1030)

Mr. Ted Opitz: That was a successful intervention.

Is there still time?

The Chair: You've got a minute.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Okay, great.

Do we know how many people are currently overseas participating in camps or in other groups? Is there any idea on the numbers we might have? I know it's not an accurate number.

Mr. Michael Peirce: It is very difficult to determine numbers. The director recently referred to dozens—in the range of 45 to 60 individuals identified.

It is a challenge because we will get reporting, for instance, that says, "There's a Canadian here", and we don't know if this is a new individual, because it just says it's a Canadian, or whether it's one of the individuals we've already confirmed. So there's always a risk of double counting.

There's a risk of inaccuracy. People are referred to as Canadians because of their accent or because of their references to hockey playoffs or something along those lines. I jest about hockey playoffs, but there are all kinds of factors that may lead to a conclusion that individuals are Canadian and in fact they aren't. If we're just getting this information from a foreign agency, it will be difficult to corroborate.

There are also some difficulties about travel and time and where these individuals are. That said, our number is roughly in the 45 to 60 area, so dozens of individuals.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Wouldn't that be something, if al-Qaeda followed the NHL, eh?

Those 45 to 60 individuals, they are all at high likelihood of coming into conflict, armed conflict, with Canadians.

Mr. Michael Peirce: They travel to conflict zones, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, Syria, Yemen. Certainly we see Somalia as well. In those circumstances, they have the

opportunity then to engage in terrorist activity. We know a number of them have been killed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Freeman.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

And thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

To both of you, I'd like to start off by asking what role each of your organizations would play in the investigation of an act of war and whether your organizations' respective roles in executing this bill's intended outcome are obvious in the legislation as it is today.

Mr. Michael Peirce: In terms of investigating an act of war, we would not have a role per se; we investigate threats to national security. In terms of activities in support of the bill, I'm not sure whether we're talking about the bill as is. As is, we would have very little role.

C/Supt Joe Oliver: The RCMP would have virtually no role.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: All right.

So how would this legislation, then, ensure due process under the law? That is to say, which courts would hear the case? Does the legislation make clear the evidentiary burden to establish that a person has engaged in an act of war against the Canadian armed forces?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: That's perhaps a question best addressed to CIC on its process.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Okay, thank you.

To Mr. Peirce, could you define for us what your organization classifies as a terrorist threat? I ask this because it has been suggested that we might include that, as well as an act of war. Approximately how many terrorist threats does CSIS investigate annually, and of those, how many are deemed true threats to Canada?

Mr. Michael Peirce: It's a many-layered question. We investigate threats to the national security of Canada, so a terrorist threat isn't part of the definition per se. A threat to the national security of Canada is defined in section 2 of the CSIS Act.

In respect of investigations, I'm not sure that we disclose the number of investigations we're undertaking.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I understand.

Superintendent Oliver, could you give us the description of terrorism as defined under the Criminal Code? Could you estimate the number of terrorism investigations in which the RCMP is involved each year and how many are convicted, things like that?

• (1035)

C/Supt Joe Oliver: The definition of terrorism is quite extensive. It would probably consume all of your time reading through section 2 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Okay. The committee will just consider section 2 as within our evidence. I'll let you answer the rest of the question.

C/Supt Joe Oliver: As to the number of investigations, I do not have those statistics. But since the Anti-terrorism Act has come into force, there have been 15 terrorist-related convictions.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Okay.

When investigating potential terrorism links, cases, or other threats to national security, are there different safety monitoring provisions in place for people who are Canadians or non-Canadians, or do we treat them in the same way?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: Within Canada, certainly someone's citizenship or their origin...if they're a threat to Canada, they're a threat to Canada. We would investigate it with the same vigour as we would any other offence.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Superintendent Oliver, what are the current charges possible for acts of terrorism or involvement in a terrorist organization? If convicted, what are the legal repercussions associated with these charges?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: I would refer the committee to section 2 of the Criminal Code, which makes reference to international agreements. It also makes reference to terrorist activity under section 83 of the Criminal Code. Again, it's quite extensive.

Depending on the type of offence, the specific offence, each possible sentence varies. It could vary from life imprisonment to 10 years in prison, 14 years in prison. If it's an attempt, it could be half that. It would vary depending on the circumstances and the judge's discretion in sentencing.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Freeman.

Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to both of our guests for being here.

Being from Toronto and having the Toronto 18 group basically on my doorstep, I'm very concerned about these types of individuals here in Canada. In your opening remarks, you talked about a number of individuals you might be investigating. I'm wondering if you can speak more to the specifics of those individual cases. I know you're not able to provide names, but I would like to know far more details than you broadly outlined in your opening remarks. Is that possible?

C/Supt Joe Oliver: I can only speak about convictions and publicly announced charges. I'm not in a position to give any details about ongoing investigations.

Ms. Roxanne James: Do you have any details on ongoing investigations, or would that be more in your realm, Mr. Peirce?

Mr. Michael Peirce: I'm in a similar circumstance in trying to speak to ongoing investigations. We obviously hold that information very closely. The level of description that I've offered is about the level of description that we feel comfortable with.

Ms. Roxanne James: I understand this is a public forum; it's either televised or it's audio or whatever else. But I'm wondering, Mr. Chair, whether we could go in camera to get these types of answers. I think it's important for this committee to understand the scope of the problem that we have here in Canada. It's not simply the Toronto 18

group. If there are ongoing investigations, I for one am very concerned as a member of Parliament for the Toronto area. So I'm wondering, Mr. Chair, whether it's possible to go in camera to get more answers.

The Chair: Ms. James, and I'll ask for your assistance, what I don't know—this was referred to by the minister—is the status of these matters, whether they're concluded, whether there's still time for appeal, or whether it's all finished.

Can anyone tell me that? Because if there's still time to appeal these matters, then I don't think we have the right to get into it.

• (1040)

Ms. Roxanne James: Sorry, there was no sense of appeal; it's ongoing investigations.

The Chair: Well, if it's ongoing investigations, they've probably concluded their answers. I don't think we're going to get any more out of them in camera than we will here.

Ms. Roxanne James: Okay.

Can I ask this question? In your statement, you broadly mentioned that activities range from fundraising and logistical support to terrorist training and operations.

Referencing back to the Toronto 18, when we think of terrorist cells or terrorist groups, we never think of it happening on our own soil. We don't think of activities such as terrorist training happening here in Canada. It was in Ontario. It was in an urban area.

Now, can you tell me, of the individuals that the ongoing investigations are for, is there any terrorist training, or camps, or those types of cells happening here in Canada? Can you tell me that answer?

Mr. Michael Peirce: I prefer not to comment on that.

Ms. Roxanne James: So you have an answer, but you're unable to comment on it. I think I can take that one way or another.

Is there more of a problem in one area of the country than the other? Can I ask that question?

Mr. Michael Peirce: I think I can say that there are investigations in regard to threats to national security across Canada.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

In one of your answers, you said that one of the biggest issues or concerns is that youth are being radicalized here in Canada. I think that was your comment, Mr. Peirce.

From media reports and things that we've heard in the news, and things that we've seen on TV, it seems to be a trend that this occurs with young people who have immigrated to Canada at a young age.

Would you agree with that statement?

Mr. Michael Peirce: No, I think there's a range of factors around radicalization. I think the minister pointed out the fact that we've had individuals with post-secondary education who have been radicalized.

There isn't a single footprint for radicalization, and particularly for radicalization that may lead to extremist activity in support of violence.

Ms. Roxanne James: I know you said there isn't a single footprint, but there must be a trend. It's not just random. There has to be something that connects these people who are being radicalized here in Canada to be involved in this in the first place. I think about people I know, and I can't imagine any of those people....

There has to be some sort of a trend. It may not be a single footprint—it may be a group of footprints—but there has to be a trend.

Could you speak to that for a moment?

Mr. Michael Peirce: I'd be inclined to answer it from the opposite direction. We're not seeing a lot of CEOs being radicalized—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Peirce: —so there are some areas where you don't see it.

But beyond that, the possibilities are relatively wide.

Ms. Roxanne James: It's funny that you said CEOs, because actually, in my first hour of questions to the minister, I asked about people who have integrated into Canada economically and socially, who have accepted Canada as their home nation, who have allegiance to this country.

You mentioned that CEOs are not typically the ones to be involved in this. Do you think, in terms of the question I asked the minister earlier with regard to integration in Canada, that has a play in this?

Mr. Michael Peirce: Well, I think his answer spoke to the fact that if they're engaging in threats to national security, ultimately, at that stage, they are not well integrated into Canada.

As to what their status may have been earlier, and whether they were at one time well integrated, they may well have been, and we do see that.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

Going back to the Toronto 18 group, we know that some of them received training here in Ontario within the GTA structure.

Can you tell me—whether you're able to or not—if any of those people involved in the Toronto 18 actually received any training overseas?

Mr. Michael Peirce: I can't speak specifically to the Toronto 18. That predated my time with CSIS.

But we certainly do have instances; Mr. Khawaja, I believe, received training overseas, came back to Canada, and was involved in a threat related to the U.K.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. James.

Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess I only have a minute left, so let me just ask this.

Post-9/11, a lot of countries beefed up their security, presumably making it harder for groups and individuals to travel, to communicate, to organize, to fundraise, and that kind of thing. Yet it seems to me and to a lot of people out there that they're always a few steps ahead of us.

Is it that they have adapted? Or in what ways have they adapted to give them that step ahead of us all the time?

Mr. Michael Peirce: I would start by saying—and then I'll turn it over—that it only appears that in many respects they're a step ahead of us, because those are the ones we haven't caught, dealt with, or apprehended in some way. That doesn't account for the many people who have been identified, some of whom have been prosecuted. When you look at the whole picture, I'm not sure they're a step ahead of us.

● (1045)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you very much. Thank you for appearing before us.

I see the clock, but my BlackBerry says 10:45—

The Chair: Well, I was going to give you another minute, but do you want to stop?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: If I have another minute, that would be wonderful.

I want to touch a little bit on whether there are specific regions in the country where you see increased activity, radicalization, or training. I know you can't talk about specific groups or things, but do you see it in urban areas as opposed to rural areas? Do you see it in certain parts of the country or in certain provinces where it's more prevalent that they're gathering and organizing?

Mr. Michael Peirce: I would repeat my earlier answer, which is that we do see threats to the security of Canada across Canada and in each of the regions of Canada and—

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Everywhere?

Mr. Michael Peirce: Everywhere.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Is that right?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Peirce.

Superintendent Oliver, thank you very much for visiting with us this morning. We appreciate your comments. This meeting is adjourned.

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