HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

CIMM • NUMBER 051 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Monday, October 1, 2012

Chair

Mr. David Tilson

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP)): I call the meeting to order.

This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and today we are here, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), to discuss the study on Standing on Guard for Thee: Ensuring that Canada's Immigration System is Secure.

Our first two witnesses are Mark B. Slater, professor, School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa, and by videoconference, Peter Edelmann, a lawyer. We're looking forward to both your presentations, gentlemen. You have 10 minutes each.

Mark, we're going to start with you.

Dr. Mark Salter (Professor, School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you.

It's Professor Salter, not Slater. That was somebody else. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Oh, my apologies. It must be my teachable moment here.

Dr. Mark Salter: No, not at all.

I'd like to thank the committee for the invitation to speak today. Today I'd like to speak about one of the central concerns of this report, and that is visa policy. In particular, I'll speak about the relationship of visa policy to security.

Visas, as you know, are one of the primary tools in Canada's immigration management regime. Even though the final decision remains with the border guard at the border, visas are an important way that border decisions are processed.

I would argue, and I think we all agree, that neither security nor liberty can be gained in zero sum and that they are not separate. We cannot balance security and liberty. We cannot be free without being secure, and we cannot be secure without being free. Those are both goals at the same time, so the question for me, when it comes to visa policy, is this: how can we make the most secure visa system while retaining our uniquely Canadian version of liberty?

At present, Canada's visa requirements are determined on a country-by-country basis. The Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism makes an individual country report based on a number of factors: growth, migration figures, the security of the travel documents, fraud, rates of refugee claims, and the like. However, these country category visas are blunt instruments. In the words of Minister Kenney, the visa

> ...is a very blunt instrument.... It undermines Canada's commercial and diplomatic interests. It's a necessary tool to use in a managed immigration system but you want to only [use it as a last resort.]

To give a clear example of this, I can point to the Czech visa crisis. In March 2009, Canada imposed visa restrictions on Czech Republic nationals because of a large influx of refugee and asylum claims and a corresponding rise in the number of fraudulent claims and the number of abandoned claims. While a large number of these claimants were Roma who claimed persecution by the Czech state, and who indeed received asylum when their claims were processed through the IRB, Canada argued that the large influx led to a greater amount of fraud, and that a visa needed to be applied.

I'd like to note that the proportion of asylum claims did not diminish; it was simply that the number increased.

This led to two kinds of turbulence for the Canadian government. First, it led to a diplomatic perturbation, kerfuffle, tension—I don't know what the appropriate diplomatic language is—and has led to an issue between Canada and the EU because, although Canada is free to impose a visa on the Czech Republic, the Czech Republic, because of the Schengen agreement, is not free to impose a visa back on Canada unless all the EU puts a visa on Canada.

This may seem academic—I'm a professor, so I suppose all things seem academic to me—and it may seem abstract, except that Canada needs the ratification of the Czech Republic and all EU members for the ratification of the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, which is crucial for Canada. The EU is Canada's second-largest trading partner after the United States, and this visa issue is in the way of that ratification.

Second, I would argue that the visa issue puts into question Canada's upholding of its international legal obligations by pre-emptively restricting the ease of mobility for Czech nationals and thus restricting their ability to claim asylum. I'm happy to answer more questions on that later.

To repeat, I think that country visas are blunt instruments, but then we need to ask what the alternatives are. Officials have intimated that there is in the works a "next generation visa program" that will sharpen visas and allow Citizenship and Immigration Canada to reach below the national threshold and make individual assessments based on what we call tombstone data—name, date of birth, place of birth, gender—and on biometric data, including photographs and fingerprints.

● (1535)

First, I would like to know what the plan is, and I hope you will ask that question also, because it is not clear to me. We have heard hints about it, but I don't know what the shape of it looks like, so I'm going to go on what other countries do and ask the question about how this next generation visa could possibly work.

Canada will collect data. What will it compare this data to? There are two primary ways in which the United States and Australia use the data they find in this kind of tombstone data and biometric data recovery: compare it to watch lists or generate profiles. Both of these policies fail. Neither profiling nor watch lists work as a deterrent, either for terror or for asylum—let me be clear. The shoe bomber, Richard Reid, fit every criteria of a profile that you would wish. He even had the beard. He was travelling on a brand-new passport, recently applied for. He was travelling on an international flight without luggage. He had no return plans. He was cross-examined for six hours the first day and seven hours the second day. He still got on the plane and managed to light his shoe on fire. That's because the profile system gets you so far, but because he was seen as a British citizen and therefore not of high risk, that didn't go further. Secondly, Abdulmutallab, the underwear bomber, was on a watch list and yet still was not apprehended.

I'd like to tell you the story of a former student of mine from the American University in Cairo, who had the same name as a 9/11 terrorist. One thing we know about the 9/11 terrorists is that they are dead, but that did not stop his name from being on the watch list. My student was unable to attend the model United Nations because his name was the same as that of a terrorist. Now, I'm not saying that there is a large number of such people, but we need to be very careful about the degree to which we inherit other agencies' intelligence. You should be sure that, as citizens of the same country as Maher Arar, we would be particularly sensitive to this.

What we know about the American system for creating their terrorist watch list is that there are thousands of people dedicated to putting names on the list and perhaps a dozen dedicated to getting names off.

It seems to me that if Canada is going to use watch lists, it has two choices: we adopt somebody else's, in which case we inherit their errors without gaining any of our own security, or we use a private watch list, because some of those are available. But the dynamic with those lists—such as World-Check—is that names go on the list and they never, ever come off. Those lists are generated for banks and other kinds of financial institutions that measure risk, not guilt.

It seems that if we use profiling we are at risk, and if we use watch-listing we have a problem, so I would like to pose three questions that I hope the committee will answer during its investigations.

First, what is the plan for the next generation visa? I feel that I'm involved in this area of public policy and I have no idea.

Second, how would it avoid the problems of false positives, false negatives, and the general increased cost?

Third, I hope the committee will ask when the Government of Canada is going to invest in more science and social science investigation so that we can gain data about the efficiency and efficacy of these border security programs. I know of no government program that right now is funding research into the increased efficiency or efficacy of border security programs.

My conclusions would be three. First, without proof that these sharper next generation visa policies can effectively or efficiently target asylum claimants, potential fraudsters, or terrorists, Canada will lose economic and diplomatic advantage for no increased security.

Secondly, the next generation visa will attempt to pre-emptively stop asylum claimants without any process of appeal or justification.

Third, and finally, Canada has no independent, non-governmental policy capacity to evaluate border security strategies. As such, Canada, since 2002, is reacting in terms of its border strategy rather than acting. I think the difference between the shared border accord and the western hemisphere travel initiative demonstrates that clearly.

● (1540)

I'd like to thank the committee again for taking visas seriously as part of border security. I think it's important and it's under-studied.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you, Professor Salter, for your presentation.

Now I'll turn it over to Peter Edelmann for his 10 minutes.

Peter.

Mr. Peter Edelmann (Lawyer, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

As you may know, I'm a criminal defence and immigration and refugee lawyer here in Vancouver.

[*Translation*]

I began my career at the Immigration Prevention Centre, in the Montreal region, while I was studying law. That's where I really discovered immigration security issues.

As I speak Spanish, I work a lot with Spanish speakers.

[*English*]

I'll start with an example of one of my clients from El Salvador. He was a police officer in El Salvador. He was involved in the investigation and ultimate incarceration of I think more than 200 gang members. He was hunted down by the gangs and ultimately had to flee, because his country, the police, couldn't provide protection for him.

He came up through the United States, where he was found not to be an asylum-seeker because of some technicalities in the law of asylum in the United States. He ultimately has found a home in Canada. Although he did not become a protected person here, for reasons I won't get into, he hopes one day to become a police officer here.

I think it's important to understand the situation in El Salvador. Why am I talking about a small country in Central America? El Salvador, aside from being a corridor for the transit of drugs, which is directly related to our policies of drug prohibition in Canada and the United States and other places, is also currently in a battle with very powerful gangs. Two of those gangs are Mara Salvatrucha and 18th Street. The 18th Street gang refers to a street in Los Angeles, California, in the United States. The Mara Salvatrucha gang also started in the United States.

Why are these powerful forces now overwhelming the authorities and the safety situation in El Salvador? In large part it's as a result of policies of removal and deportation both from Canada and the United States, but primarily in the United States, where we saw gang members being removed back to El Salvador, Honduras, and other countries in Central America, and the citizens like my client who would arrive here and, for example, hopefully one day become a police officer here, would be able to stay.

Now, we have no indication to say that immigrants or people arriving from other countries have a higher rate of being involved in gangs, but for those who are involved in criminality or in other forms of behaviour that challenge security, one of the solutions we use is to send them back. The impact of that in other countries is absolutely devastating. What I'd like to talk to you about today is the fact that it is directly related to Canada's security. It's directly related to a vision of Canada's security as to whether or not we see our security as creating, or whether we even have the ability or the desire to create, a gated community in which we have the illusion of being secure.

In my submission, that's not the vision that Canadians...or that it is a long-term vision. I would submit that, in the end, security is always going to be a trade-off. There is always a trade-off with any kind of security. There is no absolute security and there never will be.

You heard the professor talk about security and liberty. There are obviously other trade-offs as well. This committee has talked a lot about exit controls. Whether or not they could increase security in the immigration system, checkpoints are clearly very powerful security tools. Checkpoints are used in many countries as very powerful security tools, not just limited to borders but throughout the country. In many countries, there are military checkpoints throughout the national territory, and it's a very powerful security tool.

Now, there's obviously a cost associated with that tool. There's a cost in terms of economic costs, there's a cost in terms of time, of inconvenience, and the resulting loss of privacy and freedom that comes with those trade-offs.

● (1545)

But we shouldn't have any illusions...that there's always a trade-off when we're talking about security. So when we talk about imposing exit controls, or when we talk about removing individuals who pose a danger to Canadians, we have to understand that there are trade-offs.

I would hope, and I would encourage the committee, when we're considering Canada's short-term security interests today, that you also consider what our long-term vision for Canada's security is. What kind of world, what kind of Canada, do we want our grandchildren to live in? Do we want to have a gated community where we live behind walls in fear of what's on the other side, in fear of letting people pass through the walls, or in the hopes that in some fictional world we might be able to keep all of the bad people outside the walls?

I'm going to submit to you that this is not a realistic vision, that many of the security problems or the problems we have in our society are inside the walls, and that those we send outside those gates are not going to go away. They do directly affect Canadians in the sense that our friends and relatives live in those countries. Our neighbours' friends and relatives live in those countries, as do your constituents'. I would imagine that you'd be hard pressed, even with the small number of members on the committee, to find a single country in the world where you could send a dangerous individual and there would not be constituents in your ridings affected in terms of their friends and families being put at risk, and their security affected.

Ultimately, although these are complicated questions, I would hope that when we consider the security of Canada we also have a vision for the bigger picture in terms of the impact and in terms of what the long-term vision for a secure Canada looks like.

I am happy to answer questions, but those would be my opening remarks.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you, Peter. You have saved us almost three minutes here, so we will have a longer time for questions.

The first round of questions will go to my colleague John Weston.

[*Translation*]

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

I want to thank my colleague from British Columbia as well. I am also from Vancouver, and I represent the riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Thank you both for joining us today.

[*English*]

The themes that you both raise are themes in which everyone in the room invests and cares about with passion—the long-term vision, Peter, and certainly the balance between security and freedom. I think everyone agrees that there are certain people who we don't want to invite to our borders.

Certainly, Peter, the notion of a gated community is beyond the imagination of our Conservative government, which this year has issued over 500,000 visas and in 2010 issued 920,000—a huge increase over the number of visas being issued by the previous Liberal administration.

This is a country that is catering to visitors, to tourists. Certainly we are very keen on foreign investment. *Forbes* magazine calls us the best place in the world to invest. In terms of immigration, 250,000 were welcomed to our shores from all over the world. So we're robustly welcoming the world, and the world is coming to our shores.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

My first question is for Mr. Salter.

You asked whether we had a plan in terms of security and immigration. We do have biometrics, for instance. We have also centralized the process for obtaining information in all our foreign offices. Claims can now be processed wherever they are submitted. Do you encourage those measures? Do you feel that they will strengthen Canadian security? Do you have any other ideas for protecting us better?

Dr. Mark Salter: Thank you.

I will answer in English, so that I can be more specific.

[*English*]

My colleague, Benjamin Muller, will be here on Wednesday, I believe, and he is far better equipped to talk about biometrics than I, so I will leave that question for him.

But on the question of centralization of information, we are in a challenging time, in that many of the countries that provide the breeder documents we base our intelligence analysis on do not have robust document infrastructure. For example, in the United States alone there are over 300 kinds of identity documents. That's just in the United States, which has a very robust government. But when we go to places like India, Indonesia, or Malaysia, those breeder documents can be extremely insecure.

My concern is that we mistake personal interaction for automatic risk assessment, if that makes sense. It seems to me that if we use watch lists or profiling to say that it is “this set of names” or “this set of behaviours” that sets off a flag, then that seems to give us the impression of increasing our security because we've run a check, but it does not in fact actually increase security.

Does that make sense?

Mr. John Weston: Well, let me interrupt, Mark. I don't know if you have kids, but there are kids in your life somewhere. You want to protect them from bad people. If there were a possibility that terrorists would come in, you would be advocating, I'm sure, for ways in which we would keep terrorists from our shores.

As a professor in public policy, you must agree that not all our policies are acceptable to all people all the time, and certainly you will be able to cite cases where they fail us—as you have—but you still need policies. You still need concrete, practical ways.

Dr. Mark Salter: Oh, yes.

Mr. John Weston: Our government is consistently seeking those ways. That's one reason why you're here today: so we can listen to what you have to offer.

We've brought in biometrics. That's coming soon. That's been lauded by people, by law enforcement people and others.

The centralization of data is another big step forward that enables our very professional immigration personnel around the world to share information. We're working as appropriately as we can with the United States and other allies on intelligence services to keep out the terrorists.

What would you do to protect your children or your friends' children from people who malevolently seek bad things for that future generation of which you spoke?

Dr. Mark Salter: I apologize. I have not been clear. I'm not undermining that attempt.

I'm saying specifically that it is my impression that eyes on the file are better than automated risk assessment programs. It is better to have an individual making a judgment rather than putting in an algorithm.

It seems to me, if you look at the research on other ways of doing profiling, that there's a room very much like this one where border guards get together and the programmers ask, “What counts as risky?” They say, “Oh, lawyers coming from Nigeria—they're risky.” You ask, “Really? Why?” Well, they say they've had several... so okay, they put “a lawyer from Nigeria”, and that goes into the risk profile. Then the computer raises a red flag and says, “This person is dangerous.” Why? Because he fits the profile.

For me, I'm saying specifically—to put more eyes on the ground is a bad metaphor—that to put more boots on the ground is better than automated risk assessment.

● (1555)

Mr. John Weston: Let me use an extreme illustration to reinforce my—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have less than three seconds.

Mr. John Weston: Okay.

A person with a gun is typically considered more dangerous than one without, but not all people with guns are dangerous. We typically profile the gun-carrying person as someone who shouldn't get on an airplane—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

Mr. John Weston: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): A very brief answer, please.

Dr. Mark Salter: Profiling has not worked in terrorism cases thus far, and I feel...I am anxious. To replicate an automated risk assessment program that gives the illusion of security without actual security.... I think I'm much more in line with your argument for more security; I just feel that people make better judgments than computers.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

I'm taking the next round of questions, just so everybody knows.

My first question is directed to you, Peter.

On the broad subject of immigration and security, you may be aware that we're now considering Bill C-43 in the House, which the government contends will lead to the faster deportation of non-citizens who commit serious crimes.

On our side of the House, we recognize the need for an efficient and responsive judicial approach to removing serious criminals who are not citizens. We have made it clear that we are willing to work with the government to make sure our communities are safe and that criminals of all backgrounds cannot abuse our appeal process.

That being said, we have some serious concerns with the legislation before the House. We are concerned that it doesn't strike the right balance between rights and security. We are also very concerned that it is concentrating even more arbitrary power in the hands of the minister.

As an expert in immigration law, I wonder if you could give your general impression of Bill C-43.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Just on a point of order—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Yes?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: —I know this is kind of awkward because you're chairing and questioning, but I hope you will try to be as objective as possible.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I will.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: You know, as all of us at this committee know, that we will be studying Bill C-43 as soon as next week, potentially, in fact, if all things go well. No, sorry—it's the week when we come back after Thanksgiving.

I'm not sure why, when we're studying security, you would be specifically asking about a bill that you know is going to be coming before the committee. You'll be able to actually—potentially—invite Mr. Salter or Mr. Edelmann back to ask these questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): When I look at the questions that I have before me, they are related to border security. That's what we're taking a look at, and it's hard to delink deportation —the elements in the bill—from what we are studying today. That is why they're not very specific questions on clause-by-clause elements of it. These are general questions.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Well, you're in the chair, so I'll leave it. Just to keep in mind that I will bring this back up...your asking of very specific questions, as you said, and that you outlined, “What do you think of Bill C-43?” We won't need to have these two gentlemen back, then, for Bill C-43, if you're going to ask them questions about Bill C-43.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I will move on.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Since 2002—

Ms. James?

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): I'm sorry. Did I hear that you're going to move on from that particular question since we are studying it in the coming weeks?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I've heard the point that was made and I'm moving on.

Ms. Roxanne James: Okay. Thank you. I think that's appropriate.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I didn't necessarily agree, but as I'm in the chair, it's more awkward to disagree with myself or agree with myself, so....

Yes?

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Perhaps you would want to consider, Madam Chair, stepping down and having the other vice-chair sit while you're asking your questions so that we don't have this awkward relationship with you when you do ask your questions.

● (1600)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I did check this with the parliamentary secretary at first. I will be proceeding.

Since the year 2000, a number of Auditors General have been saying that the problem with who comes into the country and who gets deported is not really with the law, but with the administration of the law. Can you talk at all about the problems in coordination between the immigration service and the Canada Border Services Agency?

Mr. Peter Edelmann: In terms of the problems of coordination between the two with regard to the application of the law, I suppose I might not be necessarily in the best position....

I mean, I can comment on individual cases and in terms of my experience with respect to individual cases in terms of the priorities that are given to certain types of individuals or certain classes of individuals, and how those removals take place. For the most part, the tools exist in the law to be able to remove individuals who pose a danger to Canada.

In terms of how that law is applied, part of the challenge is that we have very broad sections in the law that can be applied in a varying number of ways. Take section 34, for example. It's a very, very broad section dealing with the security of Canada. I mean, Nelson Mandela would be inadmissible under section 34 if he weren't an honorary citizen. There are judgment calls made by individuals officers as to who they are going to use section 34 with.

Those choices are not, in my experience, particularly well coordinated in the sense that certain groups may be gone after for varying reasons, but that may not also be a standard across the country, where we see people from certain groups targeted in certain parts of the country and not in other parts of the country, or where how those decisions are made is actually not particularly clear, even to those of us practising within the area.

I don't know if that helps in answering your question, but in the sense of the coordination between...and I don't know if it's CIC and CBSA; I know there are some coordination challenges between those two organizations as well.

I don't know if that's what you were looking for.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you. The auditors have definitely pointed out those challenges, being very specific that the problems seem to lie more in the administration rather than the lack of laws or systems that we have in place.

We've often heard the minister talking about five sensational cases to illustrate the need for tougher rules around deportation. You're an expert who works within this system. How widespread are cases like these, and do you think making policy based solely on exceptional cases makes sense?

Mr. Peter Edelmann: For the most part, I would say that in these types of cases, part of the situation is that we don't always have the full picture of the cases that we're talking about—why the exact delay has happened, what the causes of the different delays were, what took place—and the overall picture of people's situations.

To give an example, I've had clients who have been here since the age of three months. They were born and raised in Canada. They've lived in Canada their whole lives, and, but for a decision by a parent or somebody at different points in their lives, they would be Canadian citizens.

Those people, when we're talking about their removal, often will be in a situation where they have children, they have families, and they're very well established here. To a certain extent, the reasons for their engagement with the criminal justice system are very much a product of Canadian society, in the sense that these are people, aside from being born here, who essentially were raised within Canadian society. Their situation is not much different from anybody else who engages in the criminal justice system.

So in terms of saying that we're going to be removing these people as a solution to the problem, ultimately we're foisting this problem onto another community. Whether or not that's right in the circumstances is something that we have mechanisms within the act to look at: let's look at all the factors, let's look at the humanitarian factors that surround the particular case.

Are there extreme cases where this maybe hasn't worked, or where there have been problems? There certainly are. But the question I would ask with respect to the minister's examples is what solutions could there have been had these cases been looked at under the current regime? In my submission, under the current act there are plenty of mechanisms to have dealt with those issues within those cases.

● (1605)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Okay, thanks very much.

Now we're going to move on to my colleague, Costas Menegakis.

Oh, sorry. How could I forget my esteemed colleague, Monsieur Lamoureux? You have five minutes.

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

I want to pick up on the next generation visa, Mr. Salter, that you make reference to.

In your presentation you make reference to other countries. One gets the impression that there might be some validity to watch lists. We're not too sure, exactly, what that validity really is. In listening to you, I get the impression that we really need to be focusing our attention on the border control officers, the number of border control officers, for example, or immigration officers that we have, when people are entering the country. We need to be looking at the possibility of increasing those types of resources or putting more emphasis on that as an issue to make Canadians feel safer, while at the same time hopefully respecting the importance of freedom.

I'm wondering if you could comment on that in terms of a solution in trying to move forward. Is that really where we should be putting our emphasis, more people-type resources at our borders?

Dr. Mark Salter: The developments in the American algorithms for generating watch lists and profiling are seeking more and more data, and are infringing more and more on the privacy of Americans, and indeed on all travellers through America.

I'm a pragmatist. My question is what security, value-added, do I get for that loss of privacy? It is not clear to me. I have not read any study that demonstrates that watch lists have been effective in deterring fraudulent asylum claims, deterring fraudsters, or deterring terrorist attacks. I don't know what security I'm gaining for that loss of privacy. I believe that when individuals are there making a decision on the ground, they have both a duty of care but also a personal engagement that is superior to a risk calculation.

If I could draw a clear parallel, risk algorithms say: we know very little about you, and that's a problem, we know nothing good about you, and that's a problem, or we know something good about you.

Canada, and other countries, like the U.S., like the U.K., like Israel, are trying trusted traveller programs. They say: we know a lot about you, so you can go through.

That sounds good, but Mohammed Atta would qualify for that program. He travelled all the time. He had valid documents. He was a frequent flyer. I don't know what extra security I'm getting for that loss of privacy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Because of limited time, this will likely be my last question, and it's in regard to, again, the watch list.

As an academic, do you find that there is enough dialogue on the whole issue and the concept of watch lists? Have there been enough studies done on the issue? Do we maybe read too much importance into watch lists?

Can you provide some feedback or comment on to what degree you believe there has been enough dialogue on the true value of watch lists?

Dr. Mark Salter: I really appreciate that question.

In my mind, the development of the passenger protect program and the permeability between American and Canadian watch lists have not been engaged in the public enough and have not been engaged in the policy realm enough. Without wanting to only speak about exceptional examples, the inability of Maher Arar to get off the American no-fly list seems indicative of the problems or the dynamics that we have if Canada uses the watch list of another country.

I think that's a really important question. Thank you.

● (1610)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have another 35 seconds.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I'm fine.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

Now we'll go over to you, Costas Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here with us today.

At the moment, as you know, we are studying security. It is something that is obviously very concerning to us as a government, as it is to all Canadians.

We want to make sure that the people who walk the streets in our communities, who shop in the places where we shop, who are around our families, our children, and our seniors, and who are around us, are people who we know do not pose a threat to society. There are a few things that, with implementation, we are hoping will assist. I'd like to get your opinion on some of them.

Are you familiar with the electronic travel authorization, the ETA, and the entry-exit provisions in the perimeter agreement we've signed to prevent foreign criminals from abusing our generous immigration system? Perhaps you can give me your opinion on whether you believe the ETA is a useful tool.

I'll start with you, Mr. Edelmann.

Mr. Peter Edelmann: I'm sorry. Whether the electronic...?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: The ETA, the electronic travel authorization—

Mr. Peter Edelmann: I think ultimately the tools.... In terms of the implementation of the tools, I think there's a number of tools that can be quite useful in terms of implementing border security and whether we implement that security at different points.

My suggestion at the beginning, and I would underline my point here, is that.... I would suggest that the committee and the government take a long-term vision of security. In terms of when we say we're going to keep the bad people out and let the good people in, what we're ultimately talking about is creating a safe community, or a gated community, that separates us from the rest of the world, that somehow Canada—

Mr. Costas Menegakis: That wasn't my question—sorry.

Mr. Peter Edelmann: [*Inaudible—Editor]*...going to be unsafe.

Sorry?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: That wasn't my question, Mr. Edelmann. I was just wondering if you had something to say specifically about the ETA, the electronic travel authorization.

Maybe I can move on to my next question, if that's okay with you.

Mr. Peter Edelmann: That's fine.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Yes.

I'll direct my next question to you, Mr. Salter. As you may be aware, with the electronic travel authorization the government will be able to know every single time someone enters or exits between Canada and the U.S., even at land crossings. In your opinion, do you think this will help the government crack down on residency fraud and people wanting Canadian status without living here or paying into the system?

Dr. Mark Salter: Thank you.

I think if the entry and exit control system works, it will help with residency fraud.

But on the previous question about whether or not the ETA is functional, whether it's a good idea, it depends upon what you're comparing that information to. I think that's my concern: that the two things you can compare that information to are either abstract risk profiles or specific watch lists, and we've seen deficiencies in both.

That's my concern. It's not just the generation of the data, but what that data will be used for. As a student of the case of Maher Arar, I'm also going to be concerned about where that information is going.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: You spoke earlier about how you would prefer the “eyes on the file” system versus electronic information. I noted that.

You also noted that your colleague who is going to be appearing before us later on in the week would be more in line to speak on the specifics of biometrics, but let me ask you a general question about biometrics. The RCMP, the CBSA, and CSIS have testified before our committee and have told us they see it as a 21st century identification tool.

Do you think biometrics would be an effective tool to prevent fraud and keep security threats out of the country, as a tool for the eyes on the file, in addition to what they're doing in their assessment of whether or not someone should come into the country?

● (1615)

Dr. Mark Salter: Again, I'm excited that my colleague Professor Muller is going to come to speak to you on Wednesday. For myself, I would say, in the same exact way, that the biometrics only put a pin in the isometry between the body of the file and the story. They don't tell you anything about the character of that person. They don't tell you anything about the history of that person.

They just sort of seal, at a moment in time, that the photo or fingerprint is associated with that dossier. If that information isn't good, if that information isn't verified by a person or if it doesn't have any inherent character back in the country of origin, then it is absolutely irrelevant. If I obtain a fraudulent driver's licence in the name of Santa Claus—speaking of my seven-year-old—and if that document looks genuine, biometrics aren't going to do anything other than confirm that I am Santa Claus, which I am not, just for the record.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Yes, well, I'm pretty sure Santa Claus won't be trying to get into the country illegally.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Dr. Mark Salter: I think there's a question about customs.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Let me ask you this, Mr. Edelmann. I would ask you pretty much the same question about biometrics.

There are people who have been refused entry into this country for a number of reasons. They happen to have six or seven names. They come back under different names, trying as many as five, six, and seven times to get in. Biometrics would identify pretty specifically that it's them trying to come back in under a different name.

Do you think it's an effective tool to prevent fraud and to keep security threats out of our country?

Mr. Peter Edelmann: Biometrics is a tool that we've used for a long time. A passport photo is a biometric tool. So in the sense of saying that we use biometrics—fingerprints are used commonly in the immigration system as it is now—we do use biometrics.

I think the question you're asking is whether imposing a biometric requirement on every person who enters and leaves Canada is a worthwhile security trade-off. I think that's the much more fundamental question that this committee needs to ask. There's an enormous cost, not just in terms of the economic cost but in terms of the trade-off that will be involved in imposing those requirements.

Is it a tool that can be used to solve the problems that you're describing? Undoubtedly it can. Is it worth the trade-off? I think that's a different question.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to you, Sadia.

[*Translation*]

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

I want to thank our two witnesses for their willingness to answer our questions. Both of them talked about balance, which is a key notion in security.

My question is primarily for you, Mr. Edelmann. What do you think is the best way to maintain that balance between protecting the security of Canadians and protecting individual rights, if we move forward in terms of security. What is your opinion on that? How should we proceed?

Mr. Peter Edelmann: That is a good question, which is fairly complex and very difficult to answer. It raises many questions. Different people will be affected in different ways. The committee must decide which of the affected people will be taken into consideration and who the stakeholders are, with regard to this issue.

I was talking about communities in other countries. Let's take for example a person charged with assault, such as sexual assault, who was not treated appropriately and was removed to a country like Somalia. Is the community being taken into account? What does that mean for the potential victims in that country? Is this something that is important to the Government of Canada? Basically, this is a philosophical question.

That's certainly important for family, friends and personal ties Canadians have with the community in Somalia. For those people, security is a much broader issue. It's not enough to say that the person in question will be removed or that the problem will be resolved. It's also important to know how the problem is defined. Basically, the same question applies to detention, biometrics and any other tools that may be used.

I encourage you to think about the fundamental question. It is a matter of determining what the repercussions are and whom they apply to. It's about knowing whether the Canadians who are here now are the only thing that matters, with the situation in the rest of the world being irrelevant, or whether the ease with which Canadians travel and cross borders is unimportant. The answers to those questions will be very different.

This is quite an issue. We must understand that, the more we focus on security, the more we lose in other areas. I won't try to answer this question in three minutes. I do not want to insult you by saying that I have an easy answer to this question because I don't.

● (1620)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Your statements are interesting, in every instance. I see in what you are telling us the importance of looking at this security issue in a much more broad and holistic way. That kind of an approach takes into account not only our country's security, but also all the repercussions it could have beyond our borders.

I will now move on to another question.

Do you think the current provision on the inapplicability of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act makes it possible to screen out war criminals? If the provision needs to be amended, how should that be done?

Mr. Peter Edelmann: I think that the act is currently worded in a very broad way. I have not seen any cases where it was impossible to remove a convicted war criminal. It's a matter of knowing whether the legislation is too broad. We are talking about the application of the legislation here. We are talking about the decisions made by officers or other civil servants. In each case, it's a matter of knowing how broad we want the legislation to be and what we want it to include.

That being said, I have not seen any cases where a convicted war criminal could not be covered by the current provisions. However, the opposite is not true.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Okay, very well.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I thank our two guests who are here today.

I want to direct my first question to Mr. Edelmann.

You've made a few comments that I'm very concerned about. Just listening to some of your terminology with regard to a question on tougher rules on deportation.... You made a comment about pushing the problem onto other communities or about how some of our families may be from some of these countries.

I'm not quite sure whether you agree that deportation is necessary or whether you think we should keep here in this country the people who are foreign nationals and are convicted criminals. I just want to ask that question straight up. I'm not fully understanding where you're coming from.

Mr. Peter Edelmann: I work in both the criminal justice system and the immigration system. To take an example in the criminal justice system, there have been attempts—and I believe the Mayor of Toronto recently made comments to this effect as to whether—

Ms. Roxanne James: Actually, I'm sorry, but I'm just going to interrupt because I need to understand, really, whether you believe that deportation is a necessary tool that Canada must use or whether it's not. It's just a yes or no answer, because I have a lot of other questions that I need to ask you. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Edelmann: In which case.... I don't have a yes or no answer for you, if that's what you're—

Ms. Roxanne James: Actually, I thought you might say that, because you were talking about keeping the bad people out and letting the good people into Canada—and I think most Canadians across our great country would think that's a good thing to do—and you seem to put it in a very derogatory way by saying that we're going to turn into a safe community or a gated community, gated from the rest of the world.

I have to tell you that as someone who was elected to represent my great riding of Scarborough Centre, that is my first priority: to keep my constituents safe. If you are implying that a gated community is something to keep bad people out of this country, I'm really not understanding why you think that's a bad thing.

I'm going to direct my next question, actually—

Mr. Peter Edelmann: I'm—

Ms. Roxanne James: —to Professor Salter, if I may.

● (1625)

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): On a point of order, Madam Chair—

Mr. Peter Edelmann: Sorry—can I comment?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: —I don't think Ms. James allowed the witness to answer any of her questions, and, frankly, I do think that's the point of questioning a witness.

If he could just give an answer to what she said, at your discretion, Madam Chair....

Ms. Roxanne James: Madam Chair, there actually wasn't a question to my second part. It was a statement. I would actually like to ask Professor Salter a question that I think is very key.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I want to remind all committee members that we do have witnesses here, and it's always good, even if it's a brief question, that when we have our time we do make it into a question as well.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually asked a brief question and he was absolutely unable to answer yes or no to whether he believes deportation is necessary, so I'm just moving on to the second witness, if I may.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Fine.

Ms. Roxanne James: Professor Salter—I hope I pronounced that correctly—I have a particular question. I know you've indicated that you do not agree with just the watch lists and the profiling, and I know that you haven't really wanted to touch on biometrics. But you did mention one particular individual, Mr. Richard Reid, the infamous shoe bomber.

Now, particularly on biometrics, because he was convicted of a crime, biometrics would actually prevent someone like him, the shoe bomber, from coming into Canada at all in the future. Would you agree with that?

Dr. Mark Salter: Only if the biometrics in the passport will be connected to other criminal databases—so does that mean that Canada will request integration with the American, U.K., and French criminal justice systems?

Ms. Roxanne James: That's a good question. One of the key aspects of biometrics is being able to compare it against other databases in the world, because obviously we don't maintain all fingerprints here in Canada. I thank you for that question so that I can clarify that.

I also notice that you're not completely satisfied that imposing visas on certain countries is the right way to go.

Dr. Mark Salter: Yes.

Ms. Roxanne James: You were mentioning the Czech Republic. I actually have some statistics on that. In 2010 Canada actually had only 30 claims coming from the Czech Republic, versus 2009, when we had 2,085 claims. The difference between 2,085 and 30 claims was actually imposing a visa restriction on that particular country.

I just want to mention as well that in 2009, when there were 2,085 claims—people coming to Canada as refugee claimants—it was actually 99%, but only 10% were actually approved as being legitimate refugees.

I understand that maybe imposing a visa is not the only way to go, but you must certainly agree that in this particular instance it did satisfy and solve the problem that Canada was faced with. I mean, when we have close to 2,100 people claiming refugee status at a cost to Canadian taxpayers, surely you can agree that the visa restrictions at that particular moment for that country were effective.

Dr. Mark Salter: As I understand the way that CIC adjudicated their claims, slightly less than half of the 196 claims that were finalized in 2008 were granted status. That means that it is not a rejection rate of 91%. Rather—

Ms. Roxanne James: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...sorry. I was referencing 2009 with 2,085 claims. There was a huge jump between the two years.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Maybe we'll let Professor Salter finish his answer, please.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

Dr. Mark Salter: I apologize. My reading of the CIC data indicated that of those claims that were retained, the proportion that were accepted as legitimate refugees by the IRB did not change between 2008 and 2009; it was simply a case that the raw numbers increased.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much. Your time is up.

We have two minutes. Over to you, Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): I'm going to share my time with Mr. Dykstra.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Okay. You have two minutes between you.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to continue on from Ms. James's point about the Czech Republic.

While you're pointing to the end result of a claim of only 186 claims actually being adjudicated, the fact is that 2,085 people from the Czech Republic applied for refugee status here in Canada. They did so here in Canada. Therefore, they went through this entire process and then decided at the very last minute, mostly because they weren't really true refugees, that they wouldn't have their files or their claims proceed through the process, because they knew they would have failed and would have had to go back to the Czech Republic.

The reason I think it's important to point that out is that when the visa restrictions were implemented in 2010, as Ms. James points out, only 30 people actually applied for refugee status. Based on your earlier comments—that profiling is not a good idea, that we need to move to a process that would see each and every person interviewed, regardless of whether it's for a visa or for anything else, because if you think visa applicants should be interviewed, I think it would have to proceed that everyone else should be interviewed, depending on the type of status they're seeking in Canada—I can't quite comprehend how....

Maybe I need to understand what your meaning of “profiling” is, because there has to be some profiling that occurs. To say that those visas were.... The only way they were confrontational, or they didn't like them.... The Czech Republic government didn't like them, but no one in Canada complained to me about the fact that we were going to have fewer non-refugees applying for refugee status here in Canada.

So I think you need to combine...or think a little bit about the fact that you're suggesting that we shouldn't be profiling with the fact that there has to be some data collection, some management, some process in place that shows that if a person meets the following criteria—

● (1630)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Can we now give time for the answer, please?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: —yes, sure—as Bill C-31 indicates, that there will be countries of safe origin, and therefore you wouldn't have status in terms of being able to apply, at least for an appeal.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Over to you, Mr. Salter.

Dr. Mark Salter: These are rich and complicated questions.

I think it is impossible to determine the reason for those individuals withdrawing their claim, because their claim was not adjudicated. We can make some guesses about why they withdrew their claim, but we cannot know. I think that logically it's just incorrect to say that those 2,000 people were fraudulent because they withdrew their claim.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I didn't say they were fraudulent.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Can we just please give Professor Salter a chance to answer?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I just don't want him to put words in my mouth, that's all.

Dr. Mark Salter: My apologies.

My understanding is that CIC does not discuss countries of safe origin anymore, but rather designated countries, in the way that they've adjudicated that.

It seems to me that we need to balance the profiling and the rule of law. As I understand Canada's international legal obligations, every individual has a right to leave their country and every individual has a right to apply for asylum. If the way that Canada runs its asylum policy is to say that we can only apply for asylum once we reach Canadian shores, then by preventing those individuals from reaching Canadian shores, we are, I think, not fulfilling the utmost of our international legal obligations.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

We're going to suspend for three minutes. Before we do that, I want to thank Peter Edelmann and Professor Salter for coming to appear before the committee and responding to our questions.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1635)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I'd like to call the meeting back to order. I would like to remind everyone that this is televised, in case any of you were not aware of this.

Our next presenter is Salim Mansur, professor of political science at the University of Western Ontario.

Salim, you have 10 minutes to make your presentation, and then the committee will have time to ask you questions. Thank you.

Mr. Salim Mansur (Professor of Political Science, University of Western Ontario, As an Individual): Madam Chair and honourable members, many thanks for inviting me to share my thoughts with the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

I appear before you as a common citizen deeply apprehensive and concerned about the drift of our country as it changes due to the rate of immigration, which is without precedent among any of the advanced liberal democracies of the west. My expertise, or to the extent my expertise is recognized by this committee, at which I have been invited to appear, is that of a professional academic, researcher, writer, author, and public intellectual of some recognition in this great country of ours. I'm proud and humbled to come before you as an unhyphenated Canadian.

Before I share with you my perspective on immigration, let me state at the outset that I support all measures under consideration that modern technology provides for securing our borders, monitoring those who seek to gain entry into Canada, those who arrive here without proper documentation and claim refugee status, and the legions of those outside Canada who want to come here as immigrants. I believe it is a no-brainer to work towards a more secure Canada and to implement smart cards, biometric systems, and other tools that are available now or will be in the future.

I have no doubt on this matter that were we to have the thoughts of our founding fathers inform us, and those remarkable leaders who have come after them, such as Laurier and King, Pearson and Trudeau, Knowles and Douglas, they would remind us that a constitution agreed upon by a free people to provide for, as John A. Macdonald put it, “peace, order and good government”, is not a suicide pact.

In the small amount of time I have before you, I want to stress upon the first principle behind the immigration policy as it has evolved since the country's centennial year and as it presently stands.

It is needless to remark that Canada is an immigrant country. Our history tells us, as we should know, that it was immigrants from Europe over the past several centuries who built this country. On the whole, they built it well, indeed so well that Canada has come to be an eagerly sought country for people from around the world, including me. Here is the point: at some stage of Canada's historical development since at least 1867, those who built Canada in the early years of its history could have reached an agreement to close the door to immigration, but they did not. They believed the strength of their country would be maintained through a judicious policy of accepting new immigrants from Europe. The key point I want to emphasize, and I have written about this at length in the public media, is that they all believed that immigration judiciously and carefully managed, and I emphasize “managed”, in terms of numbers and source of origin of immigrants should be such that the nature of Canada as a liberal democracy would not be undermined.

It is numbers and the nature of numbers that matter and, given the nature of things, determine how existing arrangements are secured or undermined. Since the open-door immigration policy was instituted around the time of Canada's centennial year, the nature of immigration into Canada started to change from what had been the pattern since before 1867 to around 1960. During the past 50 years, immigration from outside of Europe, from what is generally designated the third world, has rapidly increased in proportion to immigrants originating in Europe.

Furthermore, given the revolution in transportation and the introduction of wide-body transcontinental jetliners that have made mass travel economical and easy, the distinction between immigrant and migrant workers has been eliminated. This means—and it is not simply in reference to ethnicity—that Canada is rapidly changing culturally in ways our political elite, media elite, and academic elite do not want to discuss. The fact that this is not discussed or that it is driven under the carpet does not mean the public is not keenly aware of how much the country has changed in great measure in a relatively short period. If this pattern continues for another few decades, there's the likelihood that Canada will have changed irrevocably, and not necessarily for the better in terms of its political tradition as a liberal democracy.

In terms of the first principle, we need our governing institutions and those individuals we, as Canadians, send to represent us to boldly re-examine our existing immigration policy and rethink it in terms of what it represents and how it will affect the well-being of Canada in the years to come. I do not need to remind you that any policy, however benign or good the intent is behind the making of such policy, is riddled with unintended consequences. History is a paradox. What you intend is not how things turn out in the long run, and not even in the short term. Pick any example you want, think it through, and see for yourself the paradoxical nature of history and how it surprises us by confounding our expectations.

● (1640)

I have at hand a recent publication of Statistics Canada, *Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population: 2006 to 2031*. In other words, this projection affects me and what remains of my life, but more importantly it affects my children, my students, my friends, and my neighbours.

Your views, as our representatives, are critical and will affect all of us. You will be responsible, in terms of our history, if you take your place in these hallowed halls with the seriousness it demands, for the good and the bad that come out of your decisions.

Let me quickly, time permitting, point out from this Statistics Canada publication the following.

One, given the nature of our immigration policy since 1960, the foreign-born population is growing about four times faster than the rest of the population. Consequently, in 2031, there will be between 9.8 million and 12.5 million foreign-born persons compared to 6.5 million in 2006. The corresponding number in 1981 was 3.8 million.

Two, according to Statistics Canada's projections, the population estimated for 2031 will be around 45 million, with 32%, around 14.5 million people, being foreign born.

Three, one more interesting and critical figure is the cultural and religious makeup of Canada in 2031. The fastest growth, according to the report, is "the Muslim population...with its numbers tripling during this period. This increase is mainly due to two factors: the composition of immigration...and higher fertility than for other groups". The figures are, for Muslims, in 2006, around 900,000, constituting 2.7% of the population, and rising in 2031 to around 3.3 million, constituting 7.3% of the population.

If the level of immigration in Canada is being maintained and defended on the basis of the need to deal with the problems of Canadian society in terms of aging population, fertility rates among Canadian women, skilled labour requirements, and maintaining a growth level for the population consistent with the growth of the economy, then this policy needs to be re-evaluated. We cannot fix the social problems of Canadian society by an open immigration policy that adds to the numbers at a rate that puts into question the absorptive capacity of the country, not only in economic terms, but also, if not more importantly, in cultural and social terms, and what this does to our political arrangement as a liberal democracy.

The flow of immigration into Canada from around the world, and in particular the flow from Muslim countries, means a pouring in of numbers into a liberal society of people from cultures at best non-liberal. But we know through our studies and observation that the illiberal mix of cultures poses one of the greatest dilemmas and an unprecedented challenge to liberal societies such as ours, when there is no demand placed on immigrants any longer to assimilate into the founding liberal values of the country to which they have immigrated. Instead, a misguided and thoroughly wrong-headed policy of multiculturalism encourages the opposite.

It is no wonder that recently German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron, among other European leaders and a growing body of intellectuals, have spoken out in public against multiculturalism and the need to push it back and even repeal it.

I have written a book on the wrong-headed policy of multi-culturalism, published recently under the title *Delectable Lie: a liberal repudiation of multiculturalism*.

Time forbids me to discuss this matter in any length, but I would like to leave the following paradox with you.

We may want to continue with a level of immigration into Canada annually that is about the same as it is at present. We cannot, however, continue with such an inflow of immigrants under the present arrangement of the official policy of multiculturalism based on the premise that all cultures are equal when this is untrue. This policy is a severe, perhaps even a lethal, test for a liberal democracy such as ours.

This means we cannot simultaneously continue with both the existing level of immigration and official multiculturalism, and we must choose one or the other for the preservation of our liberal democratic traditions.

If we persist, we will severely undermine our liberal democracy, or what remains of it, compromise the foundation of individual freedom by accommodating group rights, and bequeath to our children and unborn generations a political situation fraught with explosive potential for ethnic violence, the sort of which we have seen in Europe in the riots of the *banlieues*, the suburbs of Paris, and other metropolitan centres.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that we need to consider lowering the number of immigrants entering Canada until we have had a serious debate among Canadians on this matter.

● (1645)

We should not allow bureaucratic inertia to determine not only the policy but the existing level of immigrant numbers and source origin that Canada brings in annually. We have the precedent of how we selectively closed immigration from the Soviet bloc countries during the Cold War years, and we need to consider doing the same in terms of immigration from Muslim countries for a period of time given how disruptive is the cultural baggage of illiberal values that is brought in as a result.

We are, in other words, stoking the fuel of much unrest in our country, as we have witnessed of late in Europe.

Lest any member wants to instruct me that my views are in any way politically incorrect, or worse, I would like members to note that I come before you as a practising Muslim who knows out of experience, from the inside, how volatile, how disruptive, how violent, how misogynistic is the culture of Islam today and has been during my lifetime, and how it greatly threatens our liberal democracy that I cherish, since I know what is its opposite.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much for your presentation.

We are going to go to....

Are we going to you?

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

I will share my time with my colleague Rick Dykstra. I'll let Rick ask the first question.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I thought that's what I'd heard.

We will start with Mr. Dykstra and then go over to Mr. Leung.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Mansur, we had a bit of an issue at our last committee meeting, where there was discussion around an individual's views pertaining to those who should or should not come to the country. Three times during your presentation you raised the issue that you think we should not be allowing any more Muslims to come to this country, number one; and number two, you've indicated that we should be lowering the number of those we allow into the country.

I'm assuming that your basis of belief in the first part, which is to restrict individuals from coming to this country because of their belief, or because of their upbringing, or because of their culture or their lifestyle, is that by lowering the number we would actually have the ability to do that.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, I believe the number that we have.... Because of the limitation of time, I was not getting into numbers here, but I understand it's somewhere around about 300,000, if you take into question those who are coming in as legal immigrants, who had gone through the process, including refugee claimants, including the number of—

Mr. Rick Dykstra: It's about 250,000. But continue.

● (1650)

Mr. Salim Mansur: So that's the number, and what I'm suggesting is that it is not only such an unprecedented number; it raises the whole problem of absorptive capacity. The absorptive capacity has not only to do with the economic situation, particularly in the time period we've been living through since 2008, but with the larger question of what it means for a country to remain a liberal democracy.

Through my study, I believe this is a question that we have to confront, as the Europeans are confronting today. We are just a few years behind what is happening in Europe right now. That's the concern from which I'm speaking to you, sir.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I'm not sure your view of "liberal democracy" was represented by six Liberal prime ministers. I'm assuming you didn't mean liberalism in that effect; you meant liberalism in terms of our rights and responsibilities and obligations as Canadians.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Yes.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I have just one further question, then. I would like you to clarify for me why you believe that, from a Muslim faith perspective, they are going to be a detriment to our liberal Canadian democracy here in Canada, or at least the structure upon which you frame the term "liberal".

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, it is as I understand it as a practising Muslim and coming from the background of an Islamic society.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Just because you're a practising Muslim, it doesn't necessarily mean you can say who can and who can't come to this country.

Mr. Salim Mansur: No, I didn't say that, and that is not what you asked me. You asked me how I think, and that's what I was ready to answer. That's the question.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Okay.

Mr. Salim Mansur: The cultural context from which the population is coming is a cultural context that is in many ways antithetical to the values that represent a liberal democracy such as ours or those in western Europe. The overarching issue is that these numbers are challenging our own system, our own culture.

Liberal democracy is a culture. I don't think too many of us talk about this. I'm here talking about this as a political philosopher academic, sir. I'm sharing with you my concern.

We are a culture, a liberal democracy, and that culture is based upon certain very fundamental assumptions. Those assumptions are unique in history. The critical core assumption is about individual freedom.

Now, there are cultures, in fact most of the cultures around the world, that are not liberal democratic.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Agreed, but you make one assumption: the big core assumption you make in your philosophical argument, at least from my perspective, is that our liberal democracy, what it is to be Canadian, cannot withstand the input from the Muslim community from around the world.

I would argue that the reason we are so good as a country, and why one billion out of seven billion want to come here, is that—I guess this is where you and I fundamentally disagree—we actually have a core belief, a core understanding, of what it is to be Canadian. There are one billion around this world who seek to entertain that same kind of lifestyle, that same kind of belief, that same kind of democracy, that same kind of charter of rights and freedoms that we enjoy here.

Mr. Salim Mansur: You are speaking to one of them sitting right across from you, sir. I don't know whether you know the other side from where the demand comes, but I know it from the other side. That's why I said in my conclusion that I know what the opposite is and why I so greatly value what is Canada. What I greatly value is liberal democracy based on—

Mr. Rick Dykstra: That's the dichotomy for me, because you are saying that others don't have the ability to become Canadians, as we see it, but you have that ability to do so.

Mr. Salim Mansur: No, I say it because it is a question of where we have gone in the last 40 years. In 2011 we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the official multiculturalism policy. I've written a book about it. I would invite you to read that book, sir.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I do share some of your views on multiculturalism. It's just that we don't share the same view on—

Mr. Salim Mansur: Maybe not, but that's what liberal democracy is all about.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: That's why we end up having—

Mr. Salim Mansur: You invite me to share that view. It is not about your imposing one value and my imposing another value. That's to be debated.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Your concern, though, is that the Muslim community is going to impose a value structure and system here that will overreach, overarch, and overtake ours as it currently exists.

Mr. Salim Mansur: I would argue that one would have to be an ostrich not to realize what is happening around the world. One would have to be an ostrich not to understand that a demand is coming from the organized Muslim community for its values to be accepted in a liberal democracy, values that are totally incompatible with a liberal democracy.

I'm referring to the demands of sharia implementation. We came very close to having that implemented or opened up in Ontario. That's what's happening in Europe. This is not an isolated thing. As I pointed out to you, sir, we might disagree on the issue, but this is a global phenomenon. We are discussing it globally. We are not discussing it only within Canada. We cannot say that Canada is an island unto itself and is unaffected by this global phenomenon.

● (1655)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you, Salim.

There is less than half a minute and I know my other colleague is anxious to ask a question.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Salim, I want to focus on the security of Canada's immigration system. I understand that if one looks ahead to the next generation, the multiculturalism side of it is how we socio-engineer our society. We've done that in the past. Since 1971, with multiculturalism, we have been socio-engineering the future of Canada.

What I want to focus on is the cultural sensitivities that this study —

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I hate to do this to you, Mr. Leung, but we're at 7:08, so I would ask you to make your question very succinct.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: My question is succinct. My surname can be pronounced and translated about eight different ways. Muslim surnames could be Mohammed, Mohammad, Muhamed, or Muhamad. How do we blend that into our system so that we can have security in the system to know whether a person who is coming in can be uniquely identified as a terrorist or someone who has committed war crimes?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Would you please keep your answer very brief? We have gone well over the time for this segment.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Very briefly, sir, my answer would be that liberal democracy respects individual rights. Your problem of how the names are pronounced is part of a learning process.

Liberal democracy's core value is the defence of individual rights, respect for individual rights. Counter to liberal democracy is group and collective understanding and rights. That's where the fundamental conflict is, sir.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

We're now going to proceed with my colleague, Mylène Freeman. Welcome to the committee.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Professor Mansur, I'm not quite understanding how you're linking a policy of multiculturalism and openness and inclusion to security threats. Could you draw that causal link for me? I am seeing multiculturalism and inclusion as part of what liberal democratic values are, and part of what this country is about, not the opposite. I think the opposite, policies of exclusion, can breed intolerance. Could you please explain to me how you're making this link?

Mr. Salim Mansur: I would very respectfully say that the problem you raise is particularly the problem that has come about in the last 40 years of bending the rules of liberal democracy, which is very respectful and inclusive of individuals and saying that we're not going to say something about others on the basis of their collective cultural values and rights. We have this problem in Quebec, if you're following what has happened there with the bill dealing with the hijab and niqab. This has been a huge problem in Europe.

Is that a question of simply a cultural value or are there security implications? We have had this debate here. I have appeared at the committee and have talked about uncovering the face for passport photographs and identification, and so on. That is part of the security issue that you're talking about.

Our police forces and our security forces are running into problems daily. I have spoken to a lot of police officers, some of whom are my friends. They deal with this problem on a daily basis.

Yes, there are cultural sensitivities and they are protected by the multicultural values. That's where the drift is and where the problem is. This is what I'm putting my finger on.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: In an interview with Professor Phyllis Chesler, when asked what you think Canada's immigration policy should be, you answered that it's a complicated subject, and said "My own view is there should be some sort of moratorium on immigration from the Muslim world given the nature of politics and culture exported from there to the West." You mean things that aren't compatible with liberal democracy, not actually Muslim culture, given that you are yourself Muslim. It seems you are saying that all Muslims will not be compatible in liberal democratic value systems.

I'd like you to explain or elaborate if that's your view, because unfortunately I just don't see how that is the case.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Honourable member, I can explain to you by analogy, if the time permits.

The people who understood the problem of communism were people from within the belly of communism. I can remind you of names like Natan Sharansky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Václav Havel, and others. This was a global struggle, and it was a struggle that was in a sense a life and death struggle. There were people inside the Soviet Union—as there are now inside China, Liu Xiaobo and others —who understood what was at stake.

It is not that the whole Muslim world is completely driven underground. There's a huge struggle going on right now as I speak. The problem and the challenge is that organized mainstream Islam is incompatible with liberal democracy, and we as a society have decided not to question these things.

● (1700)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: In this interview you do talk about the fact that, for instance, in the Shafia case, these girls didn't have access to resources. Isn't the problem really our giving access to these girls and making sure they have safe spaces and places to get out of these situations, like any other Canadian girl would, that are culturally appropriate, that are Muslim women's centres, or something like that, somewhere where they can go and feel comfortable? It's just like we do for aboriginal women, and it needs to be done for aboriginal women. Girls like myself, who have generations in Canada...I still have friends, like me, who come under abuse as women.

This is something that's more about resources and not actually about Muslims. If you could maybe talk about some of the resources we need for addressing these kinds of issues....

Mr. Salim Mansur: I'm a father of a beautiful young girl, and I hope she will grow up to be a very strong woman like yourself, Madam, and will have a role to play in Canada. I want her to be that. I want her to be a free and brave woman. But I wouldn't like to see what has happened to a woman who wanted to be brave and like any other Canadian; she was strangulated—Aqsa Parvez. She just wanted to be a Canadian woman.

Every aspect of what is Canada was ignored for Aqsa Parvez, was ignored for the girls in the Shafia family, and there are innumerable such things. That is the fundamental contradiction that we have brought upon ourselves. We have contorted our society. The Europeans are now facing up to it, and some of us will have to face up to it. Maybe you members are reluctant to face up to it for all sorts of political considerations.

Some of us have to speak out. Ironically, as a Muslim I'm speaking out here, reminding you that this is a deep struggle that is going on. This is a 1,400-year struggle. When you tell me that this is not about Islam or about Muslim...that it's simply about resources, well, that's a patchwork answer. Yes, we have symptoms; it's like an illness. You have to deal with it with aspirin or with other medication. So you have to have resource centres, but that doesn't answer the fundamental problem that we are importing into our country.

I only raise the issue of Islam, but there are all sorts of other issues.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Right.

I'm glad you mentioned the Bouchard-Taylor report a few minutes ago. You know the difference between secularism and *laïcité* that Charles Taylor drew. Maybe give a quick explanation of that for the committee.

I don't know how much time I have.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have about 32 seconds to respond.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: In that case, I will say essentially that I think you're arguing for something that sounds a lot more like *laïcité* to me, which is a lot more like what European countries have done that have led them to the situation of not being able to accept other communities, whereas Canada is obviously struggling, but I think succeeding, in a sense, to create a secularism where everybody is included. That means that we do need to bring out tensions and we do need to make sure that in the end.... I agree, liberal democracy needs to be withheld, women's rights need to be withheld, for instance, but that isn't something that I think is tied necessarily to shutting out communities or shutting them into themselves, but rather openness.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you, Ms. Freeman.

I'm now going to Mr. Lamoureux.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Mansur, I appreciate your comments. I don't necessarily have to agree with the comments, but I do appreciate the comments. This leads me to a different line of questioning.

Obviously, you're very concerned about multicultural policy. One of the things the government does beyond immigration is it provides settlement moneys. A multitude of programs are provided through settlement moneys. This may be something the government has not been overly successful at, but if we were to look at the settlement programming in terms of how we're spending the settlement moneys, do you think we may be able to deal with some of the concerns that you've highlighted? Perhaps we could look at the value of the education of tolerance in society, for example, and how we could better ensure that people are being provided opportunities in an equal fashion.

Do you think we could be doing a better job in terms of settlement plans in order to make our communities safer places?

● (1705)

Mr. Salim Mansur: Sir, we can always do a better job under any circumstances. That's not the issue I'm concerned about.

Until this policy of multiculturalism was introduced, we were a liberal democracy. We are still trying to be a liberal democracy. We have created a situation...and again the Europeans are not confronting it, but we have created a situation here. The implicit premise of multiculturalism is the fundamental philosophical issue we are dealing with. The fundamental premise of multiculturalism is collective identity, because it says all cultures are equal, which is a flatly untrue statement. All cultures are not equal. You cannot equate liberal democracy.

Liberal democracy is not a colour issue, by the way. I think that's where people get confused. Liberal democracy is a fundamental issue premised on individual rights. Historically, a liberal democratic system has best dealt with the vaguest contradictions in bringing about a good society.

We can deal with all the problems that arise by eliminating the argument that we have imported into our own makeup as a society that all cultures are equal. That leads to all sorts of consequences.

That's why I said history is a paradox. We can consider any situation and it is the unintended consequences that flow. I would remind you, and I have written about this extensively, that our late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, during his last visit to these hallowed halls, expressed regrets when he was asked a direct question about his thoughts on multiculturalism as the father of official multiculturalism.

These are footnotes that you can go through.

The paradoxical result has been that we have been stripping away the fundamental rights that exist in a liberal democracy. No right is more fundamental than the right of free speech. We have contorted things and created all sorts of problems. We're going to make even more problems as the numbers grow, because our political institution tries to adapt to those numbers. We try to accommodate those numbers and we are then held to those numbers. That's the nature of politics. It is nothing new that we are inventing, especially in democratic politics.

It's all about numbers. The numbers are going to lead to things evolving in a certain way. We are already seeing the signs of that evolution taking place.

The problem with the Islamic world has been the global challenge that came at the beginning of the 21st century with 9/11. It's not going to phase out so quickly. It's a historical challenge, just as the challenge of communism was throughout the 20th century.

When you raise the question about expenditures, maintenance, health care, and so on, we will need those resources. We will need those moneys. We will need to keep our economy going.

I come back to the fundamental nature of our society. There is that paradoxical relationship between where we are in terms of a multicultural society and a free and open country with the levels of immigration, the numbers. Within a generation the two things will lead to circumstances that I'm inviting you, because we send you here to represent us, to look at. This is not a hypothetical matter. This is a matter of being able to clearly forecast where we are headed. We are headed toward dangerous problems. Europe is already showing us where we are headed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I guess maybe to pick up on a quick point....

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Sorry, Député Lamoureux, your time is up. Thank you.

We're now going to go to Député Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Sir, in terms of multiculturalism, I would also point out that Senator Paul Yuzyk and Prime Minister Diefenbaker had a great deal to do with it at the time. This is a great discourse, but I think we need to re-vector to the real discussion here today, and it's Canadian security in our immigration system.

We talked earlier about incidents where somebody has arrived in this country multiple times, been deported multiple times, has come back, performed criminal acts, and so forth. That's a hole in our security, clearly. Some of the biometric data we'd like to put in place, including information sharing with our allies, will assist us in being able to identify those people who are undesirable in Canada or are actually coming here potentially to do harm to this country under fraudulent means.

There are biometrics now. Here's my Nexus card. I love this thing because you get in and out of the airport very quickly. You're identified: the retina scan, the fingerprint scan, my photograph, which is really unflattering. It's very useful.

I would like your thoughts on the security apparatus, the things we need to put in place, as Mr. Menegakis earlier referred to, as an entrance and exit strategy, so we know the people who are coming in and out of Canada. Can you comment on those things, sir?

● (1710)

Mr. Salim Mansur: Briefly, we need the technological inputs we can get, and we need to put them in place. The dilemma is, as the previous witnesses pointed out, the question about our legal obligation, our constitutional obligation to the individuals on one side of the equation, and on the other side of the equation, exactly as you have mentioned, is the concern about our security, people who want to do us harm, which is quite evident. How do we go about it? How do we balance those things? I would weigh in on the security side, given the nature of the world we are living in and the nature of the threats that exist.

Mr. Ted Opitz: I agree, and I think we need to be able to identify people categorically through photographs and tombstone data. This is very useful.

In terms of information sharing, what is your view of the databases that are shared? Should they be a 100% solution? I don't think there is one. I mean, data are only as accurate as the inputs and are subject to correction, no matter where you are.

What's your view on sharing data between allies, sir?

Mr. Salim Mansur: It depends upon who you're sharing with. I think we need to share with other democracies, and we trust and demand that they keep those data secure. But if you're sharing data with non-democracies, much of the threat that we are talking about, which is below the surface—we don't want to put it in words—is from areas that are non-democratic societies. The problem will persist. How do we share those data with non-democratic societies, knowing full well that these are societies that have no respect for their own people? We are watching what is happening on a daily basis.

Those are concerns. We as a democracy take our responsibility seriously. We can only go as far as our responsibility goes, but on the other side it will be simply a matter of prudence and pragmatism.

Mr. Ted Opitz: I don't have much time left.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have a minute and 20 seconds.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Now, would biometrics technology be enough here, or would other methods...? For example, in Israel, they use pre-screening methods to identify everybody who is boarding a plane before they depart or enter Israel via an Israeli airline.

Is there something we can do? Should we implement similar procedures?

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, the quick answer is that this is the paradox. We put a high-tech instrument in place and we assume that will solve our problem. The ultimate is human intelligence.

So on the Israeli issue, they have the most modern technology, to the extent that I have travelled in Israel, but the human intelligence is also immensely good. Ultimately it's the human intelligence side that becomes in some way the critical issue.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Can you define human intelligence?

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, the sources we deal with about security, the people who can come and talk to you. Here I am, sharing information with you, information that we can provide. Our state and its people can reach out and keep tabs on the information that comes to them. I think that's...and the confidence that the people feel to come out and share the information.

I don't have to tell you, sir, about the way the Toronto 18 was cracked, and so many others have been cracked that we do not know about because, again, the dog never barked. And the reason the dog never barked is because human intelligence prevented the dog from barking.

● (1715)

Mr. Ted Opitz: Right.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): My apologies: you actually have two more minutes.

Mr. Ted Opitz: I do?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Yes—a gift.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Rick, are you good to go?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Yes.

Actually, that's an interesting observation. Our previous two witnesses...well, one in particular, who was sitting in your chair, argued about the fact that by keeping all of the records that we do, we can't really prove whether we've actually kept out somebody bad. I think you're actually presenting the other side of that argument, which is, as you know, that it's very hard to judge who we may have kept out, because the last thing CSIS, or for that matter in terms of a North American agreement with the United States.... The public acknowledgments of those who we've kept out are not necessarily those that we should make public.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Right.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I think you're making a pretty strong argument that, with respect to security, we do need a certain semblance of order and specifics around what that intelligence collection is all about. I guess I'm just giving you an opportunity to pursue that a little further, maybe, in terms of acknowledging that, look, we need a system in place that is going to have its checks and balances in order to keep our country safe.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Yes. I agree, sir—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have about 30 seconds to answer.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, I agree. I mean, we need to have the checks and balances in place, the human intelligence is extremely important, and all of us know that the demand side is far greater than the available resource side. So how do we cut the resources for all the demand that is out there?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

I'm now going to Députée Sitsabaiesan.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Mansur, thank you for coming in today.

I for one believe that Canada's multiculturalism is something that Canada and Canadians take pride in. I represent one of Canada's most diverse ridings. It's something that constituents have told me time and again: how much they value our multicultural heritage. Over 90% of my constituents are actually considered new immigrants or immigrant populations. Canada's multiculturalism supports feelings of pride, respect, and connection to one's culture and heritage, which of course furthers newer immigrants' sense of pride in their new home, Canada.

Myself, I am a Canadian of Tamil heritage. As you said yourself, I am not a hyphenated Canadian; I'm a Canadian. But I also value my heritage and feel that it adds a lot to me, to my identity, and to what I will be leaving for my children, my grandchildren, and my community. I know that I have been able to make a bit of a contribution, and I will continue to make much more of one because of that heritage that I understand, know, and am proud of.

Multiculturalism protects one's ability to act in accordance with one's cultural beliefs or practices, but of course within the limits of the law. We know—as in some of the examples that my colleague mentioned earlier—that oppression exists within all cultures and countries. Racism, sexism...these are why we have laws to protect people in our country.

With a history of discriminatory policies like the residential schools, of course, or the Chinese head tax—exclusionary policies—I don't believe this is something we should be doing. This is probably not the direction we want to be heading in with our immigration policies in the future: further exclusionary policies or discriminatory policies like the Chinese head tax.

My question for you relates to what many Auditors General have mentioned. One after the other they have stated that there are serious flaws with how our current immigration laws are administered. Officers have no idea who should be coming to Canada, as they do not have specific or enough information to make an assessment on the admissibility of applicants. Additionally, there is a lack of performance reviews, of guidance, and of training provided to officers who are making these decisions.

Do you have any comments on the Auditor General's recommendations?

Mr. Salim Mansur: No, I don't have any comments.

Your preliminary remarks I share with you, but we have different conclusions in terms of your preliminary remarks. You come from Sri Lanka. I was born in India. If there's any country that is multicultural, if you want to talk about it, it is India, with a billion people and the diversity that we talk about—

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Sure, but my question—

Mr. Salim Mansur: I said the “preliminary remarks”.

On the secondary part, it's an ongoing problem. It's an ongoing problem of our bureaucracy. It's an ongoing problem of our institutions. Because we are a multicultural society, the people who are going to man those systems are constantly going to be facing the dilemma of how they adjudicate between people coming in and how they keep the country secure.

● (1720)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Sorry, but I'm going to interrupt, if I may—

Mr. Salim Mansur: I'm sorry. Please go ahead.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: —just because I have one and a half minutes left.

The question was directly about the Auditor General's recommendations because this is a study on security and with respect to immigration policy. You don't have anything, really, to add to that, so I'm going to move on, if I may.

I have a second question. Individuals from countries all over the world have resettled here in Canada—like you and me. New Canadians are I believe an integral part of the prosperity of our country and our communities. Their contributions to the success of communities like Scarborough, where I live and which I represent, are vast and wide-reaching.

It's my belief that immigration is integral to our economy, locally as well as nationally, and to the development of our communities. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Salim Mansur: Not necessarily.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Would you like to expand on why not?

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, again, the question is, how do we define our national interests? If you're talking about it as it's geared to economics—that immigration is necessary for economic growth—then what about when there are economic downturns, when there are serious economic problems?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: But you—

Mr. Salim Mansur: Are you, as a member and as a Parliament, ready to also retrench the numbers?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: If I may.... Sorry, but I know I have 20 seconds.

Statistics Canada actually says that within the next five years or something Canada is going to be dependent—the labour shortages—almost 100% on newer immigrants for the labour needs in this country. Are you saying we should stop immigrants from coming into this country? Then we won't be able to fill the labour needs in this country.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, you're giving me a 30-second answer to your question.

These are full of falsification issues. All these studies can be contradicted by other studies, so you're making a selective issue of one particular study.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much, Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

Mr. Salim Mansur: I could cite you Grubel's and Grady's study —

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: I was just citing Statistics Canada facts.

Sorry, Chair. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you. We have a number of speakers yet.

We'll go over to Députée James—I'm practising my French today.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you also to our guest, Salim Mansur.

I'm going to tie this.... We've gotten off track a little bit during this session, and I want to speak specifically to what Canada is doing and what we can do better to screen people coming into Canada.

I'm just going to give you an example of one particular case in which I think our current asylum system has failed Canadians. When I first read about this particular case, I was outraged. I'm just going to read this for you. It has to do with a gentleman named Mahmoud Mohammad Issa Mohammad, who carried out terrorist acts with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Despite his connection to terrorism, he has been able to remain in Canada since 1987.

Because of our current system, with the ability to seek judicial appeals on I guess deportations and so forth, he has actually cost Canadian taxpayers $3 million. Now, when I think about this case, I cannot think of a better example of how we as a government and as a society have failed the Canadian population—the Canadian taxpayers—and also really hindered the safety and security of our nation.

We got a little bit off track, but I'm just wondering what you can recommend to us—to the government—as to what we can do to correct the flaws in our current system for screening and how we can prevent this type of thing from happening again. How can someone be here since 1987 and still be fighting deportation?

Mr. Salim Mansur: As a Canadian, I feel insulted that people who have broken all sorts of laws are still living off the taxpayer portion. I am a taxpayer, just as I'm a Canadian, so I feel insulted. I think a majority of Canadians feel the same way. The quick and short answer is that once the legal processes had been exhausted, he should have been deported.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

When it comes to screening, I know you've probably heard that we're implementing biometrics and things. Would you agree that biometrics would certainly help in a case like this if there were a known record on this gentleman? Certainly, with biometrics, once he leaves Canada, he won't be allowed to come back in.

Mr. Salim Mansur: I would hope so, but in the place of origin of this gentleman, they wouldn't have the technology to put in the biometrics. I think that is precisely the problem we're dealing with: the numbers, the source origin. That has changed in terms of what was at one time the pattern of immigration from Europe. Now the pattern of immigration is predominantly from third world countries.

● (1725)

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

There are different immigration streams for people who come into Canada. Do you think one immigration stream poses more of a security threat over another? Do you see that the ability for someone to come into Canada across the border through one immigration stream over another would lead to a problem with security on a national level?

Mr. Salim Mansur: I do not fully understand what you mean by "stream", but simply, common sense tells us that there are areas in the world, source origins, that are greatly problematic and that do concern us in terms of the threat they bring to Canada.

Ms. Roxanne James: With regard to immigration streams, I'm talking about someone coming here as an asylum claimant seeking refugee status versus someone who comes to Canada, gets permanent residency, and then applies for citizenship.

Mr. Salim Mansur: I agree with that, yes.

Ms. Roxanne James: Okay.

I was just elected on May 2 of last year. I've learned a whole lot of things about our immigration system that I didn't know had actually occurred. I was a little bit taken aback at times.

One thing has to do with the entry and exit of people who come to Canada, and our ability to track who's coming in the door and who's leaving—and again, who's coming in the side door and who's coming in the back door when they should be coming in the front door.

I'm just wondering what your recommendations would be to improve our ability as a nation, as a government that is concerned about security, to better track people coming in and out of Canada.

Mr. Salim Mansur: What amazes me is that any regular bank would track me down, in any part of the world, if I had defaulted on their payments, and here we as a country cannot track down and keep track of people who are willing to exploit our system.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

How much time do I have left?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have about 15 seconds.

Ms. Roxanne James: I'm going to be very quick.

Now, you've talked a lot about the Muslim population and so forth, but do you feel that it ties into the ability to integrate easily into Canadian society? Do you think that's leading to some of the problems?

I'm not singling out any one particular group. I'm just wondering if that's the key to a successful person coming into Canada, really contributing, getting a job, and getting the most out of Canadian citizenship as well. Do you think easy integration is the key?

Mr. Salim Mansur: Madam James—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Could you just hold on for a second, please?

Unfortunately, we've gone well over. It's five minutes and 15 seconds.

Mr. Menegakis—sorry, Député Menegakis—is next, so if he would accommodate an answer, that would be great.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I'll ask my colleague to finish her thought, and then I'll continue on after her.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I think it was just your answer that we were waiting for, whether you think that for easier or better or quicker integration into Canadian society, having the language skills, etc., is key to success.

Mr. Salim Mansur: Well, to give a very quick answer we'd be generalizing, but in terms of generalizing, yes, there's a huge problem of culture and history that we are dealing with when it comes to immigration from Muslim countries and adapting to a society like Canada's.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I won't take up any more of your time.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

Thank you, Professor, and thank you for your testimony before us today and for being here.

I think you answered the first couple of questions I had. Is it fair to say that you are supportive of the ETA, the electronic travel authorization, and biometrics? I think I heard you say that you thought these technological tools, if you will, can assist us in identifying people before they come into the country. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Salim Mansur: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

Canada welcomes a record number of immigrants every year. Last year, I believe we welcomed about 265,000. If I'm not mistaken, over the last five-year period we've averaged about 253,000 per year.

A previous witness pointed out at this committee that these high levels create pressure to meet our targets. As a result, few immigrants are interviewed before obtaining visas to enter Canada. We have heard testimony in the past that the lack of staff is not the problem, nor is increasing the number of staff a solution.

What do you recommend the government do to remedy this issue? Should Canada move toward more interviews as a method of screening applicants?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have one minute.

Mr. Salim Mansur: We need more of it, and I understand that we are cutting back on our border security forces. There's the problem—trying to match our economic resources to the need. It's simple Economics 101. Our needs are greater than what we can supply them with.

● (1730)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Since we're running out of time, I will tell you this. When the RCMP and CBSA and CSIS officials spoke with us when they were witnesses at this committee, they were highly supportive of these electronic tools, particularly biometrics, which they identify as a 21st-century tool.

That, in addition to the interviewing process, I think gives the right tools to determine who the people are who are going to walk the streets beside our families.

Mr. Salim Mansur: I agree with you.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you, Salim, for coming to present to the committee. Thanks to all the members. Have a wonderful evening.

The meeting is adjourned.

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