



Ontario accent heard in video?

SAM COOLEY
Ottawa Sun

Investigators are working to confirm a potential Canadian accent heard in an English audio recording released by what is believed to be the Islamic State.

The recording was released Saturday and claims responsibility for the terrorist attacks that shook Paris and the rest of the world last weekend.

"It is concerning if it is Canadian, but it is speculative at this stage," said RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson told a news conference Wednesday, adding that the Mounties are working to confirm it.

Meanwhile, a dialect expert south of the border said it's very likely the male speaker has a Canadian — specifically an Ontarian — accent.

"I mainly listened for vowel

variations because that's where most of the variation in English is," said Erik Thomas, a linguistics professor at North Carolina State University.

The professor was first asked by CNN to analyze the recording. He took detailed notes on words chosen by the speaker in the recording, such as "explosive" and "hand."

"Everything he uttered seemed to match up with forms that predominate in Canada," he said.

Certain vowels, such as the short 'o', were among the giveaways suggesting the accent originated in regions of either Canada or northern U.S. states.

But the real "clincher" that narrowed the origin of the accent was evidence of "Canadian raising," a term used by linguists to refer to the way Canadians alter the sound

of certain vowels depending on which consonant follows afterwards.

A good way to illustrate Canadian raising, according to Thomas, is to take note of the differences of pronunciation of 'i' in the words 'side' and 'sight'.

The English ISIS audio recording praised Allah and warned the "scent of death" will not leave nations that follow the path of France in their efforts to stop the Islamic State.

The statement also referred to the president of that country as "the imbecile of France."

Despite the accent heard in the recording, no Canadian links to the Paris attacks have been confirmed or validated by CSIS or RCMP officials.

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Refugees need to be patient

Syrian refugees could be housed on military bases and in empty hospitals, Ontario Health Minister Eric Hoskins says.

"I have asked my ministry to look at recently de-commissioned hospitals," he told reporters Wednesday.

"We have a new Humber River hospital that recently moved from three sites to one."

He said refugees could also be housed in the old Oakville hospital.

"Just (Tuesday), the premier and I cut the ribbon on the new Oakville hospital. They'll be moving out of their existing premises," he said.

"I'm not saying necessarily that will result in one of the places for accommodation, but those are the opportunities I think we need to look at."

Hoskins and provincial Immigration Minister Michael Chan are co-chairs of an ad hoc cabinet committee on Syrian refugees.

Hoskins said the province is awaiting word from the federal government on how and when the refugees will be received.

"The premier made a commitment to take 10,000 refugees by the end of 2016," he said.

"We're working with the federal government with regards to their commitment to bring 25,000 by the end of the year.

"We're obviously prepared to take our fair share."

Despite Ontario's waiting list for social housing, Hoskins insisted the province can house the refugees.

"I know the federal government is looking at several options," he said.

"I know they're looking at the potential of military bases."

— Christina Blizzard

CHRIS YOUNG / THE CANADIAN PRESS



PM has no clear plan



To be clear: I absolutely believe this country should take Syrian refugees.

We have so far been sheltered from the humanitarian crisis that has engulfed Europe, as hundreds of thousands of migrants have fled the turmoil in Syria.

What troubles me is the haphazard manner in which the federal government is going about it and the way it's turned into a political football.

After little Alan Kurdi's body washed up on a Turkish beach in September, the federal Liberals tried to shame Stephen Harper for not taking enough refugees. In fact, the refugee system is very complex — as Justin Trudeau is now discovering. During the campaign, though, Trudeau made a rash promise to accept 25,000 refugees by year's end.

Now he and his political buddies in this province who helped get him elected are scrambling to deliver on that promise.

Health Minister Eric Hoskins and Immigration Minister Michael Chan are leading an ad hoc committee of the provincial cabinet to figure out just what needs to be done to bring those refugees here.

Hoskins told reporters Ontario is prepared to take its "fair share."

So divide 25,000 by 10 provinces and you get 2,500. Is that how many we'll get by year end? Or are we sending them all to the Yukon?

Dunno.

What sounded good as an election promise doesn't look so easy to deliver now. The refugee system is complex and relies a great deal on private sponsorship groups. There were already refugees

in the pipeline from other parts of the world. Will those people be pushed aside in our haste to settle the Syrians?

Those sponsorship groups are actually very effective at settling newcomers as they usually provide volunteers to help them find the education and health-care supports families need.

If the government is going to bring in more refugees and house them in army camps and disused hospitals, as Hoskins speculated they might, who will provide those supports?

Will these hospitals become ghettos? Will refugees be housed in motels on Kingston Rd.? Or will they join the waiting list for Toronto Community Housing Corp. accommodation? We just don't know.

Security is paramount. About the only person who hasn't realized the world changed in Paris last Friday is Trudeau. There are clear links between the horror in Paris and Syria. Can the federal government assure us we won't be importing terrorists?

Trudeau's prepared only to treat the symptom of the ISIS terror — the refugees — and not the root cause, which is ISIS itself. You got the sense that at the recent G20 in Turkey, other world leaders treated Trudeau as irrelevant. We'll fight the global menace of ISIS and the little kid from Canada can sort out his internal politics over there.

There are 42 days left before the end of the year and too many unanswered questions. We know for sure the 25,000 are on their way by year-end because the Liberals promised that in their election platform. They wouldn't lie. Would they?

What we need from Trudeau is fewer selfies — and a plan of action.

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