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Co-Chairs: Mr. Jasraj Singh HallanMrs. Salma Zahid



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)): Good morning.

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

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately and we will ensure interpretation is properly restored before resuming the proceedings. The “raise hand” feature at the bottom of the screen can be used at any time if you wish to speak or alert the chair.

Today, we are resuming the study on recruitment and acceptance rates of foreign students.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome the witnesses appearing before the committee today.

Today for this panel we are joined by Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada. They are being represented by Jean Léger, executive director, and François Dornier, chairman of the board. We are also joined by World Education Services, being represented by Shamira Madhany, managing director for Canada and deputy executive director.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. I remind everyone that all comments should be addressed through the chair. Interpretation in this video conference will work very much as it does in a regular committee meeting. When you are speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

Witnesses will have five minutes for their opening remarks. During the rounds of questions, I will raise cards giving warnings for one minute and for 30 seconds, and a red card showing that the time is up.

I would now like to welcome Mr. Léger.

Mr. Léger, you will have five minutes for your opening remarks. Please begin.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Léger (Executive Director, Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada): Good morning, members of the committee. François Dornier will be making the presentation on behalf of the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada, the RCCFC.

[English]

The Chair: Wait one second, please.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Chair, we don't have any of the video screens on here. I'm not sure if there's a technical issue in the room. It would be helpful if they were on.

The Chair: I will suspend the meeting for a minute so we can check the video screens.

We will test the video and resume in a minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Léger: Madam Chair, I'd like to inform you that François Dornier will be making the presentation on behalf of the RCCFC.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

You can please begin.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. François Dornier (Chairman of the Board, Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada): Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is François Dornier, and, for more than four years, I have been chairman of the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada, which is known by the acronym RCCFC. I am here today with our executive director, Jean Léger. It's a pleasure to be with you today to outline our organization's perspective to your committee.

The mission of the RCCFC, which was created in 1995, is to establish a true partnership among francophone college-level educational institutions in Canada. The RCCFC is a network of support, promotion and exchange in the development of college-level French-language instruction in Canada, a network that strives to improve and provide access to college-level studies in French.

The RCCFC's mission is also to support development of the Canadian francophonie through the expertise of its member institutions.

Our membership comprises all francophone minority colleges and virtually all Quebec CEGEPs.

We would like to congratulate the committee on its decision to examine the major challenges that francophone post-secondary educational institutions face in recruiting foreign students.

We have surveyed our members in recent weeks to determine their opinions on foreign student recruitment, and many of them are concerned about the present situation and want to see prompt, significant changes to the decision-making criteria and processes for issuing study permits.

We are proud to be cooperating on today's topic with our colleagues from the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, or ACUFC, the Fédération des cégeps du Québec and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, the FCFA. That is why we support the positions they presented earlier in your proceedings.

We will not attempt to restate their concerns, with which you are now well acquainted.

As for our perspective, all the leaders we have surveyed feel it is essential that they diversify their revenue sources. Consequently, many institutions are creating greater financial flexibility by admitting foreign students. In some instances, the survival of institutions in certain regions is even at stake. However, reliance on the foreign student market can put the return on their international recruitment investment at serious risk. Some institutions also provide services such as immigrant reception and employment integration, which are becoming gateways to college training and francophone immigration in many communities, hence the importance of this issue. This is why many college administrators would like to see greater cooperation among colleges, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and embassies to facilitate the issuing of dual-intent student visas, shorten processing time and thus avoid situations in which students arrive after the academic year has begun.

In short, our members are more concerned about processing delays, high refusal rates and real and apparent prejudice in processing student permit applications, particularly those from francophone Africa and the French West Indies, as well as the lack of consistency in decisions made by IRCC officers as they pertain to the dual intent to study and apply for permanent residence.

Consequently, our recommendations are as follows.

- (1115)

We recommend that close and more frequent contact be established between institutions and officers to assist in rectifying the present situation. We also recommend that officer numbers be increased and that officers be better trained in the circumstances of the regions and institutions. Furthermore, refusal letters should provide more details, not a merely few brief facts as is currently the case. It is important to facilitate access to agents for the purpose of obtaining more information on the reasons for refusal, greater cooperation with the institutions and better information sharing. In our

view, agents should not make arbitrary decisions without allowing the institution to discuss them at greater length. We recommend establishing a system of intent and direct communication with study permit applicants similar to the system the Quebec government has put in place for the Certificat d'acceptation du Québec, the CAQ.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, but your time is up. You will get an opportunity in the round of questioning.

We will now proceed to Ms. Madhany. She is representing World Education Services.

You will have five minutes for your opening remarks. You can please begin.

Ms. Shamira Madhany (Managing Director, Canada and Deputy Executive Director, World Education Services): Thank you, Chair. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak before the committee.

WES, World Education Services, is a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping international students, immigrants and refugees to achieve their education and career goals. On behalf of WES, I would like to express my appreciation for the work of this standing committee.

As you've heard from previous speakers, Canada is a top destination for international students. The international student population in Canada has tripled in the last 10 years. They also contribute to the broader economy as consumers—\$22 billion in GDP annually—and more than 170,000 jobs.

Most prospective international students perceive study permits as an easier path to permanent residence. Therefore, it is really important to consider the entire journey of the international student, from pre-arrival to studying in Canada, and finally transition into the workforce. Looking more holistically at their experience will help the committee understand the challenges they face as they go through their journey, and key recommendations to address these gaps. It is important to note that this will require increased collaboration among many stakeholders.

Today, World Education Services is making four recommendations to support the success of international students academically and professionally.

First is providing accurate information before arrival. Prospective international students seeking to study in Canada often get advice and assistance from recruitment agents. A November 2021 report from ICEF Monitor, a global organization that supports global student mobility, estimates that almost 50% of international students studying in Canada are referred by an agent. Inaccurate or missing information from recruitment agents presents many challenges, and, unfortunately, international students often rely heavily on these agents to make life-changing decisions.

We have a model right here in Canada that can address this issue. In 2016, Manitoba introduced legislation to regulate the educational service provider industry and protect international students from recruitment agents in Canada and abroad who may lead them astray.

Our first recommendation is that the federal government encourage provinces to introduce similar legislation to Manitoba's to regulate recruitment agents. This will enable students to access accurate information and reduce fraudulent activities.

Second is on succeeding in Canada after arrival. International students must be set up for success if they make the decision to stay in Canada as potential immigrants. Canada needs to support them in the same way that we do with other immigrants. These students need to have access to the same supports and, in some cases, additional unique supports to facilitate labour market integration. This means ensuring equitable access to settlement and employment services.

Our second recommendation is for the federal government to significantly expand the scope of settlement integration services. This includes directly supporting settlement agencies as well as post-secondary institutions to provide settlement services and employment services to international students.

Supporting international students in their transition to the labour market requires expanding access to and funding for what's called work-integrated learning and summer job opportunities. According to Stats Canada, the importance of Canadian work experience is well recognized and contributes to clear earnings advantage for international students who have Canadian education and employment experience. Currently international students are capped at a maximum of 20 hours of off-campus employment. For some, the 20-hour restriction means that they can't apply for relevant internships or co-op work placements.

Therefore, our third recommendation is for the federal government to provide international students with the opportunity to gain Canadian work experience through different work-integrated programs. This requires, among other things, revisiting the current maximum cap on working hours, depending on the occupation.

The final recommendation is on transitioning to permanent residency.

Last year, the federal government introduced a new permanent residency pathway for international students, and the cap of 40,000 applications was reached in 24 hours. According to CBIE, 60% of international students are interested in becoming permanent residents.

To qualify for a study permit, basically they must provide evidence that they will leave, yet what ends up happening is that the federal government encourages them to stay. Nova Scotia has a Study and Stay program, which is an example of an initiative that works.

We think that the government should be transparent and provide consistent information to international students, policy coherence, and alignment between study permit criteria and immigration pathway criteria. Clear policies, accurate information and streamlined supports will benefit Canada and international students who choose to study and live here.

• (1120)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we will now proceed to our round of questioning. Our first member will be Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Genuis, you will have six minutes for your round of questioning. You can please begin.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

As this is my first time here, I want to say hello to all the members and express how grateful I am to have the opportunity to be joining the immigration committee.

The Chair: Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Appropriately, it's on a study that's been initiated by my friend, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, whom I've worked with on another human rights issue.

Mr. Dornier, you were just finishing your statement. I wonder if I could just give you a minute of my time to finish up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Dornier: Thank you very much.

I'll very briefly go over our recommendations.

Their main focus is to ask IRCC to convene a meeting with the principal stakeholders and partners in the matter as soon as possible to clarify the facts and establish closer and more significant lines of communication with stakeholders. The process is currently vague and unclear.

We suggest that IRCC and its partners organize webinars in certain regions of Africa and the French West Indies to inform applicants more specifically about application requirements and to prevent the potential fraud often involved in these types of interactions.

Lastly, we recommend that IRCC be more accountable to stakeholders and partners on the topic we're discussing today. For example, we suggest that we be given more information on refusal rates, grounds for refusal, the main problems encountered, where students come from, the level of studies for which they are applying and their academic backgrounds.

We need more clarity in this matter, and we need closer cooperation from IRCC.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

In the future, I'll do better in terms of being prepared to speak in French at these meetings. It's not my first language and I'm a bit rusty, but in the future, I will.

I wanted to just ask about some of the international comparisons. We hear a lot about the efforts of other players. Certainly there's the Government of China's effort to expand its influence in Africa. There's the historic and ongoing influence of France.

What are other countries doing when it comes to engagement and recruitment of international students? Where are students who are refused by Canada more likely to end up? Are there things we should be aware of or learning from in terms of what other countries are doing in this respect?

[Translation]

Mr. François Dornier: Who's your question for?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'd love to hear from both of you on that.

[Translation]

Mr. François Dornier: It's hard to say which countries benefit from our study permit application refusals precisely because we don't have a clear and accurate picture of the reasons why students are refused. It's very hard for us to get information on the various stages of the process from the moment students decide to consider coming to Canada to study at the post-secondary level until they disappear off our radar screens. We don't know why they aren't accepted. We don't know why delays occur. So we need more clarity. It would be easier to answer your excellent question if we had better cooperation with IRCC.

• (1125)

[English]

Ms. Shamira Madhany: As we understand it, the three jurisdictions that attract students—I would call them competitor jurisdictions—would be the U.K., the U.S. and Australia. Canada is such an attractive destination because it has one of the pathways to become a permanent resident.

In terms of what my colleague just said, making sure there's clarity around provision of information in terms of expediting applications and making sure they can get into the labour market seamlessly are very important considerations.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Ms. Madhany, do you have concerns about efforts by foreign states to influence or interfere in the lives of international students when they're here in Canada and to monitor their behaviour—for instance, political activities they might be in-

involved in or things they might be saying in the classroom? Is this a concern?

What can we do to protect the rights of people on Canadian soil to participate freely in the democratic life of the university and our country without that kind of interference?

Ms. Shamira Madhany: I'm not able to respond to that question, because that's not in the jurisdiction of World Education Services. We deal with assessing educational reports of individuals who come to our country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now proceed to Mr. El-Khoury.

Mr. El-Khoury, you will have six minutes for your round of questioning. You can please begin.

[Translation]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to our guests and thank you for being here today to answer questions and give us your views on the topic we're discussing.

My first question will be for Ms. Madhany.

Ms. Madhany, I'm very pleased to hear you say that the number of foreign students admitted has tripled in recent years. The fact that many foreign students are accepted here in Canada is good news for the Canadian economy. However, once students get here, they need help in adjusting, settling and integrating into social life here. Do you cooperate with the CEGEPs and universities, the departments concerned or the companies in the labour market in assisting those people?

What specific solutions are put in place for the educational establishments and institutions to facilitate students' stay and socioeconomic integration?

[English]

Ms. Shamira Madhany: Basically, one of the recommendations that World Education Services is making is to make sure these international students have supports while they're studying. At this point, the criteria that the federal government has are that if you're an international student, you don't have eligibility for settlement services, or in fact employment services that the provinces provide.

You end up with international students who are either getting individualized services within the institution, or they might have their own community or ethnic group supporting them. We think there should be a coherent approach with organizations working together. It would be the federal government, resettlement agencies, and employment services that already provide services to immigrants.

In terms of labour market entry, they're taking particular courses. Sometimes, for the courses they are taking, they might need longer working hours or experience. Again, what does that look like in terms of the 20-hour cap?

The recommendation we're making is that there has to be an intentional approach to providing services to these organizations to support international students while they're studying and working, whether it's 20 hours or more, depending on the occupation. After they graduate, they will be able to enter the labour market pretty seamlessly, rather than trying to sort out where they're going to end up. Studies have shown that if international students are not getting the relevant work experience while they're studying and then they try to enter the labour market, they might not be able to enter the occupation in a way that is commensurate with the education they've received.

We need to bring all the various parties together to actually talk about what is the best way to support them while they're studying, before they enter the labour market, and once they get into the labour market.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: The department and the Canadian government recently established programs to enable students who have completed their studies to apply for permanent residence, more specifically in the labour market sectors where Canada needs that high-quality labour force. What can you tell us about those programs? Where do we stand with regard to those programs?

Mr. François Dornier: Once again, who's the question for?

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: It's for Ms. Madhany.

[English]

Ms. Shamira Madhany: As I understand it, what the federal government did last year was create 40,000 spots for international students who were here on a temporary basis to become permanent. Those spots filled up in 24 hours, which meant that there was a huge motivation for these students to stay. After the 40,000 spots were filled, students couldn't apply anymore. That's what I'm aware of in terms of what the federal government is doing.

Again, the question—and one of the recommendations that World Education Services has put on the table—is to make sure that international students know the steps that it takes to become a permanent resident and have the processes in place so they're able to apply and quickly get a response.

There is a program in Nova Scotia called Study and Stay. As I understand from the province, it was a highly successful program. The program included policy coherence around coming here as a student and then staying, and they support you with services so that you can become a contributing member of the province.

[Translation]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Mr. Dornier, would you please describe the issues facing foreign students both before and after they arrive in Canada and, more particularly, in the province of Quebec?

Mr. François Dornier: When we recruit foreign students throughout the francophone world, the most important thing isn't so

much to convince them to come and study in French in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. That's quite easy. The bureaucracy and admission process are discouraging. The students, during that process—

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. The time is up.

Maybe you will get an opportunity in the next round.

We will now proceed to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you will have six minutes for your round of questioning. Please begin.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I'd like to welcome our witnesses for this important study, which is particularly important for me.

Thanks to my colleague Mr. Genuis for saying it: I more or less initiated this study, and so I'm pleased to have you here today.

Figures cited in previous meetings show that there's a significant discrepancy between the refusal rates of francophone students, more particularly from Africa, and those of students from other countries. There's even a considerable discrepancy between the refusal rates of anglophone and francophone post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Léger and Mr. Dornier, I'd like you to tell the committee how important francophone African students are for institutions you represent.

Mr. François Dornier: As I said earlier, foreign students are important to us, no matter where they come from in the francophone world. We can't recruit solely in western Europe, in France and Belgium; we also have to travel the francophone world. We work hard with local authorities to attract potential students in Africa and the French West Indies. The problem is that there's a bottleneck, and we don't clearly understand the reasons for that bottleneck, which results in delays and refusals.

That's a problem for students who have decided to uproot their lives to come and study in Canada. As Ms. Madhany said earlier, these are students who want to come to Canada; they're interested, but when the pathway becomes complicated, they ask us for help, they contact us and ask us what we can do. We don't have the capacity for that. We have to clear the pathway so students can come to our institutions. That takes a lot of effort, and the institutions will get discouraged that some point. We'll eventually wonder collectively why we should recruit around the world, including in Africa and the French West Indies, if students ultimately face too many obstacles, give up and abandon that life plan.

• (1135)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I've been carefully listening to you for a while, and you also said several times that one of the biggest problems was the department's lack of transparency with the institutions you represent. In any case, that's what I understand from what I heard you say.

Mr. François Dornier: Yes, absolutely. We aren't implying that there aren't any good reasons; we just don't understand them. So it's hard for us, when we first approach students, to know whether their applications are being held up for technical reasons or whether their profile is the problem. Since we don't know which profiles historically prevent applications from being accepted, we keep approaching students telling them that we see no roadblocks and that they should apply, and we start the process with them.

If we knew a little more about why the profiles of certain students from those regions are problematic, it would be easier for us to give them the right information from the outset and to focus our efforts, energy, time, resources and money on applicants who are more likely to be accepted.

We're convinced that the best way to integrate foreign students who immigrate to Canada is through education, particularly at the secondary level. They have years in which to put down roots, establish a social network, integrate and decide whether that life plan is on track.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Then don't you see any double-speak or contradiction there, since many of those students are told that the reason for refusal is that they refuse to return to their country after graduation? There seem to be clashing visions here.

I personally think that people who have a degree are the best candidates for immigration. If they speak French and have established a social circle—

Mr. François Dornier: Exactly, you've put your finger on it.

Let's start from the assumption that there's a clash of visions. Then we'd have to have a discussion around the table to determine the government's international recruitment vision and that of the institutions. Right away, we'd see that they're the same vision. That's an assumption, for the moment, since we were not discussing this.

That would definitely be the best way to integrate immigrants if we need them to increase the Canadian workforce. But has that message penetrated the bureaucracy? That's a good question. We'd have to have a dialogue.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We've heard a lot of proposals here in committee. From what I understand, you'd very much like

to talk to IRCC so you can understand its decisions. That's a request we could include in the committee's recommendations.

We've also discussed the idea of creating an immigration ombudsman position to assist educational institutions and foreign students whose applications are rejected and who have no recourse to challenge the decision and plead their case.

Mr. François Dornier: Yes, absolutely.

We need tools to enable students who express interest but are refused to understand the reasons for that refusal. They must be able to challenge the decision, and the mechanisms for that purpose must be relatively simple. When students are 5,000, 6,000, 7,000 or 8,000 kilometers away from where they want to go, it's impossible to solve the problem without a simple mechanism.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much for your answers.

• (1140)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thanks a lot.

We will now proceed to Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, you have six minutes for your round of questioning. Please begin.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their presentations.

One of the issues with students, of course, is that when they make an application they often get rejected. This has been demonstrated with franco-Africans making applications, and there are concerns with internal biases, even possibly discrimination, in the evaluation of the applications.

One issue that has surfaced in our discussion is the notion of dual intent. IRCC indicates clearly that for your study you are able to stay, or you could choose to stay, or there are options to stay. However, people often get rejected on their applications because IRCC does not believe they will return at the end of their study.

In the process of recruitment with the agents who are working with these students, how much do they push the notion that Canada can be a destination where the students can, in fact, stay after their studies?

I will ask this question of both of the witnesses.

Mr. François Dornier: I'll let Ms. Madhany start.

Ms. Shamira Madhany: Sure.

That's one of the recommendations that World Education Services is making, because there is inconsistency. You call it "dual intent". We call it "the catch-22 situation", because, in fact, when students put in an application to come in as students, they have to demonstrate that they will study and return. Yet, on the other side, we do want young people to come to our country to study, get the work experience and stay, because we have a population that's aging, with not enough young people coming into the system. That becomes a really difficult issue for students: Should they basically lie on the application, or should they tell the truth and then be rejected?

When we were looking at this particular issue, we looked at the province of Nova Scotia. They started a pilot program called Study and Stay. They were very transparent with students: "You come here to study, and we will make sure that you stay, and we'll provide mentoring and other supports." The program was not just oversubscribed.... They found that a lot of students appreciated this and actually stayed in the province. They're going to expand this program through 2022.

The question that I put on the table, and it's a recommendation that we're making, is that the government—not just IRCC, but the government—should provide transparent and consistent information to international students. The policy coherence around individuals coming to study and the criteria for keeping people here, because we want them to contribute, should balance. It is a recommendation that we shouldn't give dual messages to individuals. We should have clarity. If we want students to stay, we should say, "Yes, please stay. If you come as a student, we will encourage you to stay."

Ms. Jenny Kwan: To follow up on that response, some of the previous witnesses suggested that the government should do away with this "dual intent" notion. Is that your recommendation?

Ms. Shamira Madhany: It really depends. The motivation among students is different. When we looked at research that shows why students are motivated to come, the students from some countries are motivated to stay and contribute. Among students from other countries, the motivation is that our education system is of high quality and stellar. They want to benefit from our education system, and then go back and contribute to their countries.

That's why I'm not suggesting that you do away with "you stay or you don't stay". It's just about clarity. If individuals choose to stay, then they should be encouraged to stay, rather than face the penalty of getting rejected if they say, "Well, I want to stay, but you're going to reject my application."

My perspective is about having clarity with respect to what we're saying to students. Don't say, on the one hand, "Are you going to stay? We'll reject you." Just say, "If you choose to stay, then we will encourage you by providing the supports."

• (1145)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Okay.

However, the policy needs to be addressed. Making it clear does not solve the problem. The government has to decide what the decision is and what the policy is, and that is the core of the issue. As

long as you have the possibility that you can stay or you can go, I think the problem is going to persist.

Maybe I'll go to the other witness, Mr. Dornier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Dornier: I entirely agree with Ms. Madhany's remarks, which accurately describe the situation.

I'd even go a little further. Why should we consider whether the student would or wouldn't like to stay? That shouldn't even be a consideration. It's great to see students who, for personal reasons, wish to come and study here and then return to their countries. Good for them. Some students may also come to study in Canada because they see no future in their own countries.

We've seen many examples of those kinds of situations, in Quebec's CEGEPs, for example. Under programs established with Reunion Island, the French government literally paid students to live in Quebec while they studied because there were too many young people at home and no opportunities for them. Those students knew when they left Reunion Island that they were going—

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Dornier. Your time is up.

We will now proceed to Mr. Hallan for our second round of questioning.

Mr. Hallan, you will have five minutes for your round of questioning.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Madam Chair, before I get to my questions, I want to discuss the urgent motion I put forward with regard to Ukraine. Is that something we can do now?

The Chair: Yes. The motion was moved. You have time.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: I just want to discuss that with everyone who is here. There was a friendly amendment by Ms. Lalonde, which I think we can incorporate. Mr. Genuis also put forward an amendment, and Ms. Kwan had a motion of her own. I don't know if it's the will of my colleagues that we combine all of these motions and amendments, because they are all pretty similar, through a friendly kind of amendment and then pass it through today. I think it's quite urgent, given the situation in Ukraine.

The Chair: Ms. Lalonde, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[English]

As Mr. Hallan has suggested, I would like to propose a friendly amendment to his motion. I'm not sure about the will of the committee. Do you have to read your motion, and then I would propose my amendment? I do believe that would be the first scenario. Then we can move on with the rest.

But we do have witnesses. I'm not sure how my colleague wants to proceed.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Given the urgent situation, I think it's best if we can pass this now with all the other colleagues. I think everyone is pretty much on board.

The Chair: Mr. Hallan has moved a motion:

That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House: We (a) condemn the unwarranted and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, a clear violation of international law, and (b) call on the Government of Canada to support refugees who are impacted by this conflict and ensure that it is prepared to process applications on an urgent basis without compromising needs in other areas.

That's the motion Mr. Hallan has moved. Now we will have debate on this.

Ms. Lalonde, go ahead.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Personally, I only received Ms. Kwan's motion; I didn't receive the other ones.

Could someone please send them to me?

[English]

The Chair: The motion Mr. Hallan brought in was sent out to all the members last week, and the clerk has sent Ms. Lalonde's amendment just now.

Ms. Lalonde, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm sorry, but I didn't get them.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

As my colleague mentioned, I'd like to move an amendment to the motion. If my amendment is accepted, the text of the motion will read as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House: We (a) condemn the unwarranted and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, a clear violation of international law, and (b) call on the Government of Canada to support refugees who are impacted by this conflict and ensure that it is prepared to process applications on an urgent basis without compromising needs in other areas.

• (1150)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lalonde.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Chair, I don't mean to be a fly in the ointment here.

The witnesses are here to participate in this important meeting.

I realize that committee members will want to debate the motions, but I'd like us first to wrap up the meeting with our witnesses. It's a matter of respect toward them; they've come here to testify.

Then we can debate the motions. We're here to discuss franco-phone students, but we're debating a motion relating to Ukraine. The witnesses are here and it's important to listen to them. They've prepared for the meeting and we must show them some respect.

[English]

The Chair: Yes.

Just so it is clear to all the members, Mr. Hallan has moved a motion, and Ms. Lalonde has moved an amendment to that motion. Right now we have the amendment moved by Ms. Lalonde on the floor. We will have to deal with that, and then this motion, before we can proceed. We will have to deal with all those members who wish to speak to this amendment and the motion before we go ahead.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Chair, I've been trying to get your attention for the last little while, but somehow—

The Chair: I have a speaking order. After Ms. Lalonde, we have Mr. Dhaliwal, and then Mr. Genuis and Ms. Kwan.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: I agree with Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe that we should go to the witnesses and then work on this motion, because it's a wise thing to do and I'm fully supportive of it.

The Chair: Wait one second. Let me clarify with the clerk.

In regard to the will of the members to proceed with the witnesses, everyone will have to agree that we adjourn the debate and take it into the in camera portion after we are finished hearing from the witnesses.

Do we have the consent of all the members to adjourn for now and then get into debate on this motion in the second part, which will be an in camera meeting, after we hear from the witnesses?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I don't think it would be appropriate to consider this motion in camera. I don't have a principal objection to the timelines, but surely we could continue to debate this motion in public after we've finished hearing from the witnesses.

Provided that there was no objection from colleagues, I would be supportive of continuing with the witnesses but resuming consideration of this motion in public.

The Chair: If that's the will of all the members and we have consent from all the members, we can proceed with the second round of questioning. Based on the time we had, Mr. Hallan has five minutes, and then we have Ms. Kayabaga for five minutes, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for two and a half minutes, and Ms. Kwan.

We can end that and the witnesses can leave, and we can continue the public part of the meeting and debate this motion.

Is that the will of all the members? Okay. That's good.

We will now proceed to Mr. Hallan for his five-minute round of questioning.

You can begin, please.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleagues for that discussion as well.

This question is for both of the witnesses today. There's a lot of talk about the recognition of foreign credentials, and also the transferring of credentials for students for what they have already completed.

Do you guys have any recommendations, or do you see any issues that happen with refusal rates sometimes, because they don't get recognized for what they have done in their home country?

• (1155)

Ms. Shamira Madhany: I guess I can respond.

Can you hear me?

The Chair: Can everyone hear?

Ms. Shamira Madhany: I'm getting an echo.

The Chair: Okay, one second. We will check the interpretation.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Also, Madam Chair, when a member moves a motion, doesn't that get taken out of the five minutes allocated? I have previously noticed that this is usually the case.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On that point of order, the committee had agreed unanimously to resume at this point, so that would normally be the procedure. However, since we took a few minutes—

The Chair: In regard to the time, I'll let Mr. Dhaliwal finish, and then we will proceed to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Dhaliwal, with the consent of the members we will be proceeding to the debate of the motion, so I decided to give the time.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I apologize, Madam Chair. You made the point precisely.

The Chair: Thank you.

Can everyone hear? Can we resume? Is interpretation working?

You can begin, Ms. Madhany.

Ms. Shamira Madhany: In terms of foreign credential recognition, at World Education Services, in fact, we accept verified documents. As a result of COVID, we now get a significant number of credentials that come through digitally from institutions when we get individuals from our top three countries: India, Philippines and Nigeria.

With respect to international students, generally, as I indicated during my remarks, the majority of international students at the undergraduate level come through recruitment agents and they come directly to the post-secondary institutions. World Education Services will see international students after they have finished their study, when they want to either get licensed or go back to school. At that point, we do get their information directly from the institutions.

I will leave it at that in terms of getting the credentials. We do it digitally. We get verified documents and we work directly with the post-secondary institutions in their home countries.

[Translation]

Mr. François Dornier: I'm not sure my information's complete, since the systems we use in and outside Quebec are very different. So I don't have a precise answer to that question.

[English]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you.

Mr. Dornier, in your remarks you said that your organization tried to reach out to IRCC. Can you elaborate a little bit more on that? Have you tried to reach out to them to give more recommendations, or can you give any information to the committee?

[Translation]

Mr. François Dornier: I'll ask the executive director of the RC-CFC to answer that question.

Mr. Jean Léger: Thank you, Mr. Dornier.

Yes, we put that question to our members, and they told us they had contacts with IRCC representatives and embassies but that those connections weren't very reliable and were in fact somewhat erratic in certain respects. That's why reliable and permanent communication channels must be established and why we mustn't settle for random opportunities to speak to people.

I think that's one of our members' important needs. Furthermore, one of the recommendations we made was that a meeting be organized with IRCC as soon as possible to establish those lines of communication. Currently, IRCC and the post-secondary institutions go their own ways, but it's important that they come together.

We know that won't necessarily happen immediately after the committee has completed its work because we know that takes time, but we're asking that the meeting be held as soon as possible. The present situation undermines our post-secondary educational institutions, particularly college-level institutions, which wind up on the losing end. Ultimately, it's francophone immigration that suffers. So it's important that this communication channel be established immediately.

[English]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Just to continue with that, is there something that...? This is your time. You can give us some of those recommendations. Would you like to take a bit more time to pass along what you'd like to say?

• (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Léger: There was the concept of accountability. The chairman of the RCCFC board mentioned it earlier, and I think it's key, because the situation is urgent. We suggest that IRCC report on at least an annual basis, with detailed explanations about placement rates, country of origin, reasons most frequently given for refusals, and so on.

The process needs to be systematized because at the moment, it's a bit random, we feel. That's why very clear guidelines are needed.

Mr. François Dornier: The perception is that decisions are made arbitrarily, and this perception needs to be corrected.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Time is up.

We will now proceed to Ms. Kayabaga.

Ms. Kayabaga, you have five minutes for your round of questioning.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to start by thanking our guests today for taking the time to speak to us in our committee.

[Translation]

My first question is for Mr. Dornier.

There have been ongoing discussions with various witnesses, who have presented several items of information, including the fact that 60% of francophones are in Africa.

We are in the process of preparing this study on refusals of African students. Can you comment on the fact that there are not enough visa offices in West Africa in key locations capable of facilitating the process for African students to come to Canada?

Mr. François Dornier: It has been a problem in several countries, where the consular diplomatic services responsible for providing official documents are difficult to access. Applicants must report in person and some electronic records are required, but the process can be difficult.

When we do our recruiting, we no doubt complicate the lives of student applicants, particularly in Africa, because not only must

they go to the official locations to start the process, but sometimes go back two or three times. It's complicated enough to do it once, and even more so if they have to go back.

It's definitely a problem. It is very rigid, restricted and not very flexible with respect to the measures in place to facilitate the administrative process for students in these situations.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Would you agree that this would be a good measure to adopt in order to achieve our ambitious objective of increasing francophone immigration to Canada?

Mr. François Dornier: Definitely.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: We recently read some articles on that subject. The students often pay their fees when they submit an application and are still waiting to be accepted.

Can you tell us whether your institutions receive these amounts? If so, are these fees reimbursed if the student is not accepted?

We know that this also causes problems for African students.

Mr. François Dornier: That's a good question.

I can speak on behalf of Quebec CEGEPs. Registration fees are usually low at the outset, but I can't give you the technical details. In principle, yes, they are reimbursed.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: According to some of the articles, students have been complaining. They are asking why Canadian institutions accept these payments and do not reimburse them when their applications are refused.

Do you agree that these fees should be reimbursed to students who have not been accepted?

Mr. François Dornier: If we are talking about a nominal administrative fee for processing applications, that's one thing. If we're talking about tuition fees paid in advance, that's another matter.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: We are talking about tuition fees.

Mr. François Dornier: We cannot not reimburse tuition fees to a foreign student who is not coming. These must be reimbursed. In any event, the courses have not begun. It's a basic principle. If a service hasn't been rendered, then the amounts paid need to be returned, of course.

• (1205)

[English]

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Now I'll ask Ms. Madhany a question.

You talked about the Study and Stay program that seemed to be a success. Can you expand a little on how we can expand on the program and what measures you would propose, as well as what safeguards you can suggest to the government to put in place to ensure that we have a legitimate process to accept students and to make sure that we are able to retain them?

Ms. Shamira Madhany: Basically, it's a program in Nova Scotia called Study and Stay. It's an application process. You have to apply, and you have to demonstrate through a letter of intent why you want to stay in Nova Scotia. The way it works is that you have to commit to staying in Nova Scotia for a full two years after you get this process and application.

During the time you are there, you get mentorship and you get supports. They will make sure that everything is supported, like housing or whatever else. I don't mean free; I mean generally from a rent perspective.

They've found that it has been highly successful—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Your time is up. Thank you.

We will now proceed to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you can please begin.

[*Translation*]

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

As this is my final turn to speak, I would like to thank the witnesses directly, because they were well prepared. They gave terrific testimony today on behalf of the committee and its eventual recommendations.

I asked you a question earlier, Mr. Dornier, and I think that we skirted the subject to some degree because we went off in another direction. Can you tell us how important foreign students are for specific programs at certain institutions? I'm thinking of institutions like the Matane CEGEP. They are mainly regional postsecondary institutions, in places like Saint-Félicien and Alma. I've been told that some programs in these institutions were there partly because of the foreign student clientele.

Is what I have been told true?

Mr. François Dornier: Yes, absolutely.

For many colleges, even outside Quebec, the tipping point for some programs amounts to only a few students. Quebec's or Canada's demographics make it difficult to find the required students. Searching for them abroad and bringing them here can mean the difference between continuing with the program and having to abandon it.

If the cohorts are not filled by foreign students, some complete course offerings may be compromised or even cancelled.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Broadly then, let's agree on three facts today.

First of all, foreign students are seeing their dreams shattered because they are not accepted here.

Secondly, there is a risk that programs will have to be cancelled, particularly in the regions, which will penalize students who are already there and who are Canadian citizens.

Thirdly, Quebec society could end up losing students who would otherwise have remained here afterwards.

Am I mistaken?

Mr. François Dornier: No. I would even go so far as to add that consolidating francophone communities in the country also requires francophone and francophile students who come here to study French. It's exactly the same mechanism more or less across the country.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: So we are talking about francophone communities outside Quebec?

Mr. François Dornier: Yes, definitely.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We've already discussed the government's 4.4% target for francophone immigrants, which has never been met. I see you agreeing, Mr. Léger, I think there is work to be done on that.

Mr. Jean Léger: Precisely. There's a lot of work to be done.

Attracting international students is a very important factor in reaching this 4.4% target. That's why it's absolutely essential to address it now, because the government has been promising to reach this target for a long time, but we've never really implemented any measures to get there.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. The time is up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you all very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will now proceed to Ms. Kwan for two and a half minutes, and that will end the round of questioning.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

One of the issues that international students have brought to my attention is this. They are often not able to get enough points through the express entry system because their work experience here in Canada is not counted towards that calculation. They've been arguing and suggesting that this should be changed, and I'm inclined to agree with them.

I'd like to get your thoughts on that in terms of the immigration policy. Should students' work experience and study experience be recognized towards their landed status application through the express entry system? This is for both witnesses, please.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Dornier: You're talking about the experience they acquire while they are students here.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: That's correct.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Dornier: Okay.

That definitely should count. Factors like these demonstrate that students are putting down roots and becoming accustomed to their new environment and their new host society. I've always taken the same view of students who come to stay with us. All positive measures other than those related strictly to their studies should definitely be taken into account.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

Ms. Shamira Madhany: The issue you're talking about in terms of express entry.... Express entry is for those who are highly skilled, and it means that the points that students would get are for what's called NOC A, B and C. It depends on the courses of study that the students are taking. If they're not taking courses in one of those higher classifications, this means they will not get the additional points for the work experience they have here.

That's why it becomes really important, in terms of work-integrated learning for job opportunities, that we give them longer time periods, more than 20 hours, to be able to recognize the experience, because if you're working at Subway, 20 hours isn't going to give you the work experience and extra points for express entry. That's what the issue is.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

Just very quickly, because I think I'm out of time, Mr. Dornier, what are your thoughts on lifting the 20-hour limit?

[Translation]

Mr. François Dornier: I don't want to get into too much detail, because I don't know enough about the process.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, but time is up.

With that, our round of questioning comes to an end.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the witnesses for appearing before the committee. If there is something you would like to bring to the notice of the members of this committee and you were not able to bring it up today, you can always send a written submission to the clerk of the committee and it will be distributed to all the members as we come to the stage of drafting the report and the recommendations.

With that, thank you once again to all the witnesses. You can leave this meeting, and we will then proceed to the next part. Thank you once again for your input.

The witnesses have left. As agreed by all the members of the committee, we will come back to our debate. When we adjourned the debate, the amendment by Ms. Lalonde was on the floor. We will debate the amendment and vote on that, and then we'll go back to the main motion.

We have the amendment from Ms. Lalonde on the floor.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Before we get into the full debate, there are several things I'd like to comment on about the motion.

I think in general we're all on the same page with [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and given the urgency of the situation, it makes sense that we address this now.

I've also tabled a motion on this point. Most significantly, there are two aspects where it differs from—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Kwan.

Right now we are debating the amendment that was brought in by Ms. Lalonde.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Yes, I understand, and I'm getting to that, Madam Chair.

I'm not about to move my motion, but I'll say that, on the issue around this, with Ms. Lalonde's amendment and related to the main motion itself, there are other components that I think would be essential to incorporate into the motion as well.

One is that it would be absolutely critical, in my view, that the motion incorporate language around visa-free travel for Ukrainians. This is something [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to make sure it is in place, and that's something I would like to put forward at the appropriate time. Also, I propose to incorporate into the motion language that says “institute visa-free access to Canada for the Ukrainians impacted by the conflict with Russia by rapidly obtaining an electronic travel authorization.” I think it would make sense to put that forward.

I also want to note, Madam Chair, that the language around rapidly obtaining an electronic travel authorization is the suggestion from Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, which I think adds to the call for visa-free travel for Ukraine.

The other piece that I'm very concerned about is this. We need to make sure, as the government works expeditiously to address this issue, that there are additional, increased staffing resources put in place, and immigration levels as required to address the crisis. If we don't, we are going to create a problem.

What we have seen with the Afghanistan crisis.... The government basically just robbed Peter to pay Paul to deal with the Afghanistan crisis and, as a result, the backlog in the immigration system across all streams only got worse, along with the impact of COVID. We can't let that happen again. In my view, it would be absolutely essential that we amend the motion by adding “increase staffing resources so that the existing—

• (1215)

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Kwan.

You cannot move any amendment right now. Right now we are debating the amendment that was proposed by Ms. Lalonde. Until we vote on that, you cannot move any amendment. You can talk about it, but you cannot move any amendment right now. First we have to vote on the amendment proposed by Ms. Lalonde. I wanted to clarify that.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I understood that, and I wasn't moving the amendment. At the appropriate time, I will, but I'm suggesting, as we contemplate this motion, that what we need to do is think about all the elements within it, and that's what I am commenting on.

Related to the motion, along with Ms. Lalonde's amendment, is this piece, and that is to ensure that language is incorporated into the motion to increase staffing resources and adjust immigration levels as required so that the existing backlog for all immigration streams is not further impacted by this humanitarian crisis. That's my intention with respect to that.

On the amendment from Ms. Lalonde, I'm okay with that amendment. I don't think it takes away from the main motion; however, at the appropriate time, Madam Chair, I would like to move my other two amendments.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

I have a speaking list. Next is Mr. El-Khoury, and after that we will go to Mr. Ali.

Please proceed, Mr. El-Khoury.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Chair, Mr. Hallan moved a motion and Ms. Lalonde put forward some amendments. That's clear to everyone. We are ready to debate Ms. Lalonde's proposal. Otherwise, we would have to call for a vote. After that, we will move to the next phase.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Ali, please go ahead.

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. El-Khoury said the same thing that I wanted to bring to your attention, because we have a motion in front of us, and then we need to move on.

I would like to make one comment.

We had a similar situation in Syria and Afghanistan. Why wouldn't we have visa-free entry for people from there, who were in a similar situation? Why are we having special treatment here?

We're here studying discrimination against students from various countries and refusal rates. We are suggesting something different for one country as compared to a similar situation we had in Syria and Afghanistan, where we didn't have the same suggestion for them.

I just wanted to bring that to your attention.

● (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ali.

We have Mr. Hallan, and then Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: I'll echo what Mr. El-Khoury said.

We have a motion in front of us, and we have an amendment. Let's get on with the vote, so we can continue, and then we can bring in Ms. Kwan's amendments after that, just to respect the time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hallan.

Mr. Dhaliwal, go ahead.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Chair, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] support Mr. Hallan's motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Chair, I would imagine that my friend is going to put his headset on.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Dhaliwal, we were not able to hear properly. Can you please repeat what you said?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Chair, I support what Mr. Ali and Mr. Hallan have said.

I will also support one part of Ms. Kwan's amendment, where she says we have to put more resources in, and we have to adjust the number of people.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Seeing no further hands raised for debate, we will now proceed to the vote on the amendment proposed by Mrs. Lalonde.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We now have the motion proposed by Mr. Hallan as amended.

I will read the motion:

That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House: We (a) condemn the unwarranted and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, a clear violation of international law, and (b) call on the Government of Canada to support Ukrainians and people residing in Ukraine who are impacted by this conflict and ensure that it is prepared to process immigration applications on an urgent basis without compromising needs in other areas.

Mr. Genuis, please go ahead.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I had submitted in advance to the clerk another amendment, which conveniently aligns with one of Ms. Kwan's proposals. It might be more convenient for us to deal with each of her proposals individually.

I will move the amendment that I have submitted in advance. It would add, "and (c) implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada."

This obviously doesn't preclude other amendments afterwards. I would like to go ahead and move that amendment.

The Chair: Could you please repeat your amendment?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes.

First of all, it involves striking the earlier "and" before (b), and then adding to the end "and (c) implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada".

That's largely self-explanatory, but to respond to the question that was asked about this not having been done in other cases, we have to acknowledge that it has long been the policy of the government to have visa-free travel for some countries and not for others. I don't think we would want to say that the government, in the interests of fairness, has to either have visa requirements for every country or visa requirements for no country. These determinations are made on the basis of a variety of considerations around the likely numbers that would come and the impacts that would have in terms of the speed at which it would occur, capacity and so forth.

However, in light of the current situation in Ukraine, and the fact that many comparable partner countries already have visa-free travel.... Ukrainians have the option, for instance, of travelling to many countries in Europe. Many may have family members in Canada and, therefore, may want to come to Canada as well. Visa-free travel makes sense in this particular context.

It doesn't mean we shouldn't consider it in another context, and it doesn't mean that we maybe shouldn't have done it in other contexts, but I think it makes sense under the circumstances in this particular case. That's why I'm moving this amendment.

Thank you.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you.

We now have an amendment proposed by Mr. Genuis on the floor, which we will debate.

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I support the amendment for visa-free travel for Ukraine. This is something New Democrats have been calling for since 2018. Unfortunately, the government has not acted on it. Had the government acted on it back then, perhaps some of the people who are in Ukraine at this moment might have made it out already.

The visa application of one of my constituents was rejected by the government two years ago, and now they're absolutely frantic because of the situation. Making travel visa-free for Ukraine would be absolutely essential.

I certainly support it, and then, at the appropriate time, I'd like to move my other amendment.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now have Mr. El-Khoury, and then Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Go ahead, Mr. El-Khoury.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Everyone knows that "travelling without a visa" means arriving in Canada without being subjected to biometrics or a security check. We are in Canada, where the safety and security of every Canadian and every person who lives in Canada is an absolute priority. In the event of infiltration by Russian agents who might be terrorists among the Ukrainians, and they were to arrive in Canada,

what would be our government's position if there happened to be a security problem?

Some people are wondering why these immigrants are not required to provide biometrics when arriving in Canada. As you know, Madam Chair, Ukraine is now considered a war zone. Under our temporary suspension of removals program, when someone is in Canadian territory, that person cannot be deported to a country that is considered a war zone. We are therefore stuck with them.

Others have asked why we don't do what other neighbouring countries or European countries do. They can go there without any problems, without a visa, because they are already integrated into a system that gives them these privileges.

To return to what I was saying, security is an absolute priority for us. We can't endanger the lives of our fellow citizens, and we would like people to be subject to biometrics and security checks before arriving here in Canada.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to point out to my honourable colleague that at the moment, people who arrive by Roxham Road get their biometrics done in Canada. If this were really a priority for my colleague, the situation would have been remedied a long time ago. There is a country at war at the moment and people want to get out as quickly as possible. I believe that there is consensus among the opposition parties for us to request that visas be suspended.

I would also like to put forward an amendment in support of my friend Mr. Genuis.

My friend, I very humbly propose adding after "(c) implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada", "including by the rapid issuance of an electronic travel authorization". In French, the acronym is AVE.

I don't know whether Mr. Genuis is willing to agree. If so, I'm prepared to vote in favour of his motion.

• (1230)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, are you proposing a sub-amendment to the amendment proposed by Mr. Genuis?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, I would add, "including by the rapid issuance of an electronic travel authorization". Is Mr. Genuis agreeable to that?

[*English*]

The Chair: Let me consult the clerk for a second.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you can propose a subamendment if it is within the scope of the amendment. Can you please read your subamendment so that the clerk can get it and we can see whether it is within the scope of the amendment?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, all right.

The wording is as follows: “implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada, including by the rapid issuance of an electronic travel authorization”.

It's what Ms. Kwan was talking about earlier.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, can you please repeat your subamendment so that the clerk can get it?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, I'd be happy to repeat it.

The wording would be as follows: “implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada, including by the rapid issuance of an electronic travel authorization”.

[English]

The Chair: Can you repeat it again? The clerk is trying to type it. Please go slowly.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's what my father always asked me to do.

I would add the following: “implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada, including by the rapid issuance of an electronic travel authorization”.

Would you like me to send it to everyone by email, Madam Chair? I think that would be easier.

[English]

The Chair: Please go one word at a time—a bit slower. We have not been able to get it. Can you please repeat it and go very slowly?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We'll send it to you by email, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: You could send it by email to the clerk.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's what I've been saying, Madam Chair. You might be having some trouble hearing, but I have repeated it three times and I could send it by email.

[English]

The Chair: Please email it to the clerk of the committee.

We will wait while you email it to the clerk.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm sure that we will get there.

[English]

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

Clerk, please go ahead and read the subamendment.

• (1235)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Paul Cardegnà): Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe's amendment would add, at the end of the motion, the following words: “including by the rapid issuance of an electronic travel authorization”.

[English]

The Chair: We now have a subamendment to the amendment proposed.

Mrs. Lalonde, go ahead.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

With the circumstances of what's going on, we're trying hard to find a way to come up with a consolidation of goodwill.

My only concern regarding the amendment and the subamendment is that we're still not addressing the security overall. For my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, I do not think the eTA he's proposing as a subamendment actually requires biometrics. So, we still have the same perspective, where individuals... I know from a government perspective that we have welcomed and processed more than 4,000 individuals from Ukraine who were looking to come to Canada.

That's my only concern. I don't know if Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe wants to elaborate on that, but it still doesn't, in my view, address some of the concerns expressed by my colleague about security here within Canada.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dhaliwal, go ahead.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Chair, it's not only the Liberal members who are concerned about the security. I'm not going to repeat what my other colleagues on the Liberal side have said, but it's my understanding that the Ukrainian Canadian Congress is also concerned about bad people coming to Canada if there is a visa-free entry.

I personally would suggest that members of the opposition reconsider, because the security and safety of Canadians are of utmost importance. This is not going to go well, so please consider that and do not support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Hallan, go ahead.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Look, I think we're all concerned about security. There is no doubt.

Mr. El-Khoury had some really good points, and so did Mrs. Lalonde.

There is always going to be the question or the threat of a Russian sympathizer who could be there, but the way things are right now, I believe that they do check if someone is a threat to Canada, whether it is visa-free travel or not. I believe that's the way it is. There is an element of "Is that person going to be a Canadian threat?"

What we're doing here is proposing, given the situation, what we want to see the government do. Whatever decision the officials make with the minister, however that looks, whether they think the biometrics need to be done, whether they think that should be done before that person gets here or when they're here, I still think that's a decision they should make.

Right now I think what we're doing, in the spirit of trying to help the situation any way we can, is proposing this so that it can be taken into consideration by the officials and the government. I think we're all on the same page. That security threat is something that's serious, and I think everyone understands that part.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Chair, I would just like to reassure my colleagues.

Naturally, I take security issues very seriously. On that score, I'm in agreement with my colleague Ms. Lalonde. It's important to be very careful.

Today, there are many European countries whose citizens do not need a visa to come to Canada. Might there not be a large number of pro-Russian sympathizers in these countries? They could come to Canada without a visa, but as my colleague just said, there are security checks even when a visa is not required. I just want everyone to be aware of this. That's the first thing.

There was also discussion about the Ukrainian community. Notwithstanding the respect I have for our colleague Mr. Dhaliwal, I understand that some members of this community are somewhat fearful, but there are also many other countries asking us to suspend the visa requirement speedily, but only for the duration of the conflict, of course. We are all naturally hoping that it will end sooner rather than later, but we are not asking for a complete suspension of the visa requirement.

I don't know whether you've noticed, but something else has come into play, which is that Ukraine is going to apply to join the European Union. That would make it a member of the European community. If Ukraine were to be accepted, how could we require that citizens of one particular country in the European Union need a visa while citizens of other countries in the European Union do not?

All of that needs to be taken into consideration. I understand that it's a sensitive matter, but I think that we are all capable of coming to an agreement fairly quickly. I would nevertheless like to assure my colleagues that I too, not surprisingly, have concerns about security issues. However, I believe I've given you a few arguments on behalf of our request to suspend the visa requirement for Ukraini-

ans affected by the conflict, but only for the duration of that conflict.

• (1240)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I just want to highlight this point as well, as indicated by other committee members. It is certainly not the case that New Democrats are not concerned about security. Of course we are, and of course we want to ensure that Canadians are also protected.

We should also keep in mind that visa-free travel for Ukraine is being adopted by over 140 countries, most recently by Ireland. Does that mean those other countries and Ireland are not concerned about their security? Of course not. There are other measures that could be put in place, but time is of the essence right now with this situation. People's lives are at risk.

I have to tell you that my constituent, whose grandmother is 80 years old, had their visa application rejected two years ago. They are desperate to get out of the country to reunite with their loved ones and to be safe.

This is why visa-free travel is absolutely essential at this point in time. It is essential to facilitate and expedite this process. This is what we have to do to support the people of Ukraine at this juncture.

The Chair: Mr. El-Khoury, I have you on the list.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Chair, I believe that the Canadian government and the people of Canada are helping Ukrainians who are caught up in this situation in every way possible, from both the military and humanitarian standpoints. As a government and as a people, we are prepared to continue to make a greater effort than any other country in the world.

But it's impossible for us to understand all of the risks involved in such a decision. It's much better to leave it to the appropriate officials with the required experience, whether at the Department of Public Safety or the Department of Immigration. We need to let them assess the situation and determine whether they can speed up the visa process for all these people, provided that our safety and security are maintained.

I believe that the responsible officials know what to do and that they are prepared to cooperate with these people and give them the help they are requesting.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. El-Khoury.

Next we have Ms. Kayabaga, and then Mr. Redekopp.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Chair, I wanted to propose a subamendment to the subamendment. I don't know if that's possible.

The Chair: Process-wise, that's not possible. We cannot have a sub-subamendment. It stops at subamendment until we vote on the subamendment, and then you can propose another subamendment. We cannot propose any further amendment to the subamendment.

• (1245)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Can there be a friendly amendment to this?

The Chair: If there is unanimous consent from the committee, there can be a friendly amendment, but there cannot be a sub-subamendment.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: What I was trying to propose is an expedited simplified visa process that would allow people to come, but would also ensure verifying security, which would work with what they're proposing but in a way that the security piece is still there.

The Chair: Ms. Kayabaga is proposing a friendly amendment, so if we have consent from all the members, it can go ahead, but we cannot have a sub-subamendment. Right now we have a subamendment, so we cannot have another "sub" to it.

Do all the members agree with the friendly amendment proposed by Ms. Kayabaga?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Can I hear the text one more time, Madam Chair, please?

The Chair: Ms. Kayabaga, can you please repeat what you are proposing as a friendly amendment?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Yes, I'm proposing an expedited and simple way to process the visas, but with a level of security involved. That would be the friendly amendment. I don't know if Jasraj... I don't know what you think.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

It makes sense in principle, I think, but we need to see the text before we can say we're comfortable with that.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: It's a friendly amendment.

The Chair: Ms. Kayabaga, I would propose you send this.

Let's deal with the subamendment first, and then maybe you can propose a subamendment once we vote on this subamendment. Meanwhile, you can send it to the clerk.

First of all, let's deal with the subamendment.

Mr. Dhaliwal, go ahead.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Chair, as Mr. Genuis has said, why don't we just...? It's easy to work with consensus, so if Ms. Kayabaga can send that amendment quickly, it can be incorporated and things can work more cordially. I'm sure Ms. Kwan is also waiting for her amendment.

Let's do this—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Would all the members agree that we wait until Ms. Kayabaga can send her friendly amendment to the subamendment?

I think everyone is in agreement with that, so we will wait for Ms. Kayabaga to send it to the clerk.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, while that is going on, I'm embarrassed to admit this, but I realize I made a small grammatical error with my original amendment. In order to flow properly, it should say at the beginning of (c) "call on the Government of Canada to", because otherwise it doesn't make perfect sense. It says "We...implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada", which we obviously can't do.

While we wait for that, if we can by unanimous consent undo my error and add that in, I would be very grateful.

The Chair: Does everyone agree on making a change? Mr. Genuis has mentioned that there is a grammatical mistake, and in order to change that, we would need unanimous consent.

Mr. Genuis, please repeat it again.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It would add after (c) in the amendment, "call on the Government of Canada to".

The Chair: The amendment Mr. Genuis has proposed would read, "call on the Government of Canada to implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada". That's the amendment after the friendly change to that and the unanimous consent.

We will wait for Ms. Kayabaga to send her friendly amendment to this subamendment.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, while we wait, could I proceed with the amendment that I would like to propose so we can save time?

The Chair: Let's deal with this subamendment. We have to deal with the subamendment before we get to that.

• (1250)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Could we suspend for a few seconds?

The Chair: Yes, I can suspend the meeting for a few seconds until the clerk receives the friendly amendment.

The Clerk: You don't have to suspend. I have it now. I can read that out to the members, if you wish.

The Chair: The clerk has received the friendly amendment from Ms. Kayabaga and he will read it.

Mr. Clerk, go ahead.

The Clerk: With regard to Ms. Kayabaga's text, I don't know whether it would replace Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe's amendment or it would be added to it, but the text is, "adopting an expedited and simplified visa process that ensures verifying security".

If I may, I'll ask Ms. Kayabaga whether that is to replace Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe's amendment or to be added at the end of it.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: That was my friendly amendment or friendly sub-amendment. I don't know what they're called, so you tell me.

The Clerk: I need to know what the committee wants to do. Does the committee want that to be a replacement of the text that Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe proposed, or do they want it to be added to the end of it?

The Chair: Ms. Kayabaga, are you proposing this friendly amendment to replace what Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe brought as an amendment or to add it after that subamendment?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: From the full proposal that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe put on the floor....

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Kayabaga. Can you please repeat that?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: It's to replace both Mr. Genuis's amendment and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe's—

The Chair: No, we cannot go to that. Right now, we have the subamendment. No change can be made to the amendment proposed by Mr. Genuis.

Now we are debating the subamendment that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe proposed. If members agree, we can make a change to that subamendment.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Let's do that with that proposal.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I don't think we should proceed as proposed. We want to see the language of “visa-free travel” in there.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, could I jump in? I've had my hand up for quite some time now but have not been recognized.

If I could jump in at this point, given that—

The Chair: Just one second. I'm consulting with the clerk on this. I have you on the speaking list, and we will get to you based on the speaking list.

Do all members agree to take this friendly amendment proposed by Ms. Kayabaga?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Okay, so we have the subamendment proposed by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe on the floor and we are debating that subamendment.

I have a speaking order of Mr. Redekopp and then Ms. Kwan.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to bring us back a little to just remember what's happening. We have a dictator in Russia who's attacking Ukraine. There are people in Ukraine who are suffering right now. We know that the government is not going to take what we do and implement it word for word. They're going to do their detail and they're going to do what they want to do. We're really conveying an intent here.

If I look at the clock, we have five minutes left. I would plead with everyone to not get bogged down in all these technical details that the government is going to ignore anyway. Let's convey the

spirit of what we're trying to say to help the people of Ukraine. If we need a few more minutes, I'm proposing that we take those few minutes to get through this so that we get this done today.

That would be my humble and sincere request to this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I agree. Call the vote on the subamendment and then the amendment, please.

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I wanted to say the same thing.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would now like us to move on quickly to the vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: Seeing no further debate, we will vote on the subamendment proposed by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We have the amendment proposed by Mr. Genuis, as amended by the subamendment, on the floor.

Mrs. Lalonde, go ahead.

• (1255)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I hear my colleagues on all sides of this. For me, it's important that as we go through this process.... It would mean that basically anyone.... We agree that we fully support welcoming Ukrainians to Canada, those who want to. Listening to the news, we know that individuals who are being interviewed on the ground are saying they are going to stay and fight for the country that they call home. There are many others, as we saw, who have made their way out to various locations of NATO allies where they are being received. Possibly they have chosen to come to Canada and other countries. We're going to welcome those individuals.

For myself, I just want to reiterate the importance of the current system, which seems to generally have worked fairly well for close to 4,000 Ukrainians at this time.

I'm not sure what's going to be decided, but, as expressed here, as we welcome people, we want to also ensure the safety and security of our Canadians. I want to make sure I am on the record for that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Lalonde.

Ms. Kayabaga, go ahead.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to echo my colleague's comments as well. I think it's important that this discussion, and how we're going about it, is not translated as us not wanting Ukrainians to come here. It's the opposite.

I have lived through the war. I know what a war does to people. We want to welcome Ukrainians in this country and make sure people have a safe place to call home, but it's important to talk about Ukrainians who live in Canada already. Their security is also at stake. We have to consider that.

Our vote today is not to say no to Ukrainians. It's to keep in mind all Ukrainians, including the ones who are already living in our country today and the ones who are coming here. We look forward to welcoming all the Ukrainians who are going to come to Canada. We'll live alongside them and support them to heal through this process that is traumatic for everyone.

I also want to get on the record to make sure we're talking about our security being compromised. We're talking about Ukrainian Canadians who might be compromised through this process if it's not done the right way.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dhaliwal, go ahead.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also want to echo my colleague's comment that we do welcome the Ukrainians, who are going through a very difficult time, but we can achieve those goals without compromising security using other means. That is what we believe. On this side of the committee, on the Liberal side, we fully support Ukrainians in a difficult time, but we can achieve what the opposition wants to achieve with a different process without compromising the security of Canadians.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Ali, go ahead.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I echo my colleagues. Since this war started, to see those horrible stories, I've had a hard time sleeping. We stand with our Ukrainian friends.

I also would like to recognize that our Minister of Immigration and IRCC have done an amazing job, as 4,000 Ukrainians have been processed to come to Canada, and the work permits and student permits of those who are already here have been extended. They're doing an amazing job expediting those applications, and I'm sure in the situation they can get the process expedited.

At the same time, our intent is to keep Canadians safe. We're all on the same page, but at the same time, we all have concerns in terms of keeping Canadians safe. There are security concerns and our work was based upon that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ali.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead.

[Translation]

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

I think that everyone has been able to present their arguments. As my colleagues know, we are all working on behalf of Ukrainians,

who are currently engaged in a war. All the political parties are in agreement.

But we are still divided on one issue. Dozens of other countries are not requiring Ukrainians to have a visa; Ukraine could, from one day to the next, become a member of the European Union, and people from several countries in which part of the population is pro-Russian do not require a visa to come to Canada.

Personally, I have confidence in our security services here on the ground. Many Ukrainians are asking us to remove the visa requirement so that they can help their families.

I believe that to be the right decision, but it doesn't mean that we should necessarily be divided. We may not vote the same way, but I know that each and every one of us wants the best for everyone and the safety and security of Quebeckers and Canadians.

As everyone has now had the time to speak, I would ask that we call the vote.

[English]

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

Seeing no further debate, we will now go to a vote on the amendment proposed by Mr. Genuis, as amended by the subamendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Now we have the motion proposed by Mr. Hallan, as amended.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I move an amendment to the motion by adding the following: "increase staffing resources and adjust immigration levels as required while respecting Quebec authority on immigration, so that the existing backlog for all immigration streams is not further impacted by this humanitarian crisis."

I would propose that this amendment be added as an additional point to the main motion. The language of this amendment—

The Chair: The clerk has distributed the amendment proposed by Ms. Kwan to all the members of the committee.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I was just going to say that the language of this amendment, in both English and French, has been sent to the clerk, so that all committee members can receive that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dhaliwal, go ahead.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The amendment brought forward by Ms. Kwan is a very important one, and I fully support it, because it would not put pressure on other immigrants who want to come to Canada.

During the Afghanistan issue, we got a tremendous number of calls. We were calling IRCC, and most of the staff there were busy. There's nothing wrong with that, but in fact, it takes attention away from other immigrants who want to come, and it takes a toll on them.

It's a good suggestion, and I would love to see other members support it, as well.

• (1305)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mrs. Lalonde, please go ahead.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I just want a few minutes to read it, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We will go to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

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

I simply would like to say to my colleagues that the only thing I'm unhappy about is that this amendment could affect levels of immigration. I am aware of the fact that the wording gives consideration to Quebec and its powers, but if immigration rates are increased everywhere except Quebec, then the demographic weight of Quebec will take a hit.

I'm in agreement with the increased resources mentioned in Ms. Kwan's amendment, but humbly and amicably, if we could remove the reference to levels of immigration from the amendment, I would certainly support it. Otherwise, I will have to vote against it. If immigration levels increase everywhere in Canada except Quebec, then I'm sure you'll agree that it would affect Quebec's demographic weight. I don't think that's what we want and I don't think it's necessary in order to deal with the current crisis. For staffing resources, I fully agree, but I don't think there is a need to mention levels of immigration.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mrs. Lalonde, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'd like to thank my colleague for his comments, because that's approximately what I would like to say. I want to ask Ms. Kwan whether she would agree to modify her amendment by removing the following words: "adjust immigration levels as required while respecting Quebec authority on immigration". The amendment would then read as follows: "increase staffing resources so that the existing backlog for all immigration streams is not further impacted by this humanitarian crisis."

I'll let you think about that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mrs. Lalonde, are you moving a subamendment to the amendment proposed by Ms. Kwan?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Yes.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

We now have a subamendment on the floor, as proposed by Mrs. Lalonde.

Can you please repeat the subamendment?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Of course.

I propose that the amendment be changed to read as follows: "increase staffing resources so that the existing backlog for all immigration streams is not further impacted by this humanitarian crisis."

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Lalonde.

The subamendment proposed by Mrs. Lalonde is deleting the words "and adjust immigration levels as required while respecting Quebec authority on immigration".

Mr. Dhaliwal, go ahead.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank Mrs. Lalonde, because that's very thoughtful. If we look at the numbers, we have the highest number of immigrants coming in this year, last year, and the year before. Basically, that has already been taken care of, and I fully support the thoughtful amendment proposed by Mrs. Lalonde.

I would personally suggest that Ms. Kwan also accept this, and then we can move to the vote on that. Let's get this over with.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

From my perspective, I actually think it is absolutely essential that numbers for immigration levels also be considered in this humanitarian crisis. If in fact the government moves to including refugee opportunities for Ukrainians, then we need to actually adjust the numbers for the levels. Otherwise, all that does is put pressure on other countries that need those levels numbers, because there's no magic here. This is a zero-sum game. For these numbers, if you take from one place, the others will fall short.

We saw that in fact, through an ATIP, with respect to the government's approach on incorporating the Afghanistan humanitarian crisis and the TR to PR initiative. The government announced those immigration measures without bringing in additional staffing resources and immigration levels numbers, which meant that numbers for the express entry system for the skilled foreign workers category were going to be paused for some years as a result.

Those are the kinds of repercussions we have when we make announcements without taking into consideration the entire picture. I think it is quite critical that immigration levels numbers be considered and adjusted if necessary. I am taking into consideration Quebec and recognizing Quebec's authority, which is why my amendment incorporated that aspect as well.

With respect to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe's concern—that if population numbers increased in other provinces, they would drop in Quebec—if their overall population in comparison to that of other provinces was decreased, we could think about other initiatives in collaboration with the Quebec government to see how we could adjust that, including, for example, by boosting up the numbers for immigration measures for francophone immigrants. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] we can adjust that by way of immigration measures.

That's why I think my amendment has broad enough language that respects Quebec's authority on immigration. That would require the government to talk to the Quebec government to ensure that those concerns are addressed accordingly.

I would urge committee members to reconsider their thoughts on this. Leaving out immigration levels numbers will cause a problem down the road, and that's something that I think we can all agree we don't want to see.

• (1310)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

Now we will take a vote on the subamendment proposed by Mrs. Lalonde to the amendment proposed by Ms. Kwan.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1315)

The Chair: The subamendment passes.

Now we have before the committee the amendment proposed by Ms. Kwan, as amended.

Seeing no further debate, could we please take the vote on the amendment proposed by Ms. Kwan, as amended by the subamendment of Ms. Lalonde?

The amendment that was proposed by Ms. Kwan was this: “increase staffing resources and adjust immigration levels as required while respecting Quebec authority on immigration, so that the existing backlog for all immigration streams is not further impacted by this humanitarian crisis.”

Now, after the subamendment proposed by Mrs. Lalonde, which has passed, the amendment as amended will read, “increase staffing resources so that the existing backlog for all immigration streams is not further impacted by this humanitarian crisis.”

Could we have the vote, please?

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The amendment passes.

Now we have before the committee the motion proposed by Mr. Hallan, as amended by the amendments proposed by Mr. Genuis and Ms. Kwan.

Seeing no further debate, we can vote on the motion.

Would you like to have the clerk read the motion as amended, or is everyone clear on what we are voting on?

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Can he read the motion, please?

The Chair: Okay. We'll give this difficult task to the clerk of the committee to see if he can put this together.

The Clerk: Okay.

To the members of the committee, my understanding is that this is what the committee is voting on now. The full motion would be this: “That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House: We (a) condemn the unwarranted and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, a clear violation of international law; (b) call on the Government of Canada to support Ukrainians and people residing in Ukraine who are impacted by this conflict and ensure that it is prepared to process applications on an urgent basis without compromising needs in other areas; and (c) call on the Government of Canada to implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada, including by the rapid issuance of an electronic travel authorization, increase staffing resources so that the existing backlog for all immigration streams is not further impacted by this humanitarian crisis.”

Do I have that right?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Sorry, should there be an “and” before the last clause, on increasing resources?

The Chair: Yes, we will add that. That will be adjusted.

We will go for a vote on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you. The motion as amended passes.

We will prepare a report and, at the first opportunity, either Wednesday or Thursday, I will present that in the House.

Now, because of the time—we are already beyond one o'clock—we cannot go into drafting instructions today. I just want to bring it to the notice of all the members that we will have to take some time out on Thursday to do the drafting instructions, because we have to do that this week in order to give time to the analyst to start drafting the report on the study we have just completed today.

What would be the will of the members?

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

• (1320)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I wonder if it's possible to extend the meeting on Thursday to accommodate that. My understanding is that we have the minister and officials, and that's a pretty critical point of discussion. We wouldn't want to cut into that.

The Chair: I will have to check that. It will be up to the whips to decide, so I will have to check that and then get back to the committee, if that would be appropriate or okay with everyone. I will come back to the members with that. Let me check, and then I can either send out an email or the clerk will send out an email on behalf of the chair. I will get in touch with all of you to clarify that.

I just want to inform all the members that the minister is available, and the clerk got in touch. He is available to combine the supplementary and the main estimates on Thursday.

Is it all right with all the members that we have both the supplementary and the main estimates on Thursday, and the minister will be here?

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, if it's one hour, I don't.... If the minister could come for two hours to discuss the supplementary and the main estimates, I think that....

The Chair: The minister is coming for an hour, and then the officials will be here for the second hour. We checked on the availability.

The other option would be that, when he comes on the 24th, as we are doing the study on the differential outcomes, we could do one hour on that study and one hour on the main estimates, if that's the will of the committee. Otherwise, we can combine both the supplementary and the main estimates on Thursday, have the minister for an hour, and then the officials for the second hour.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'll defer to others who have been here longer, but in the committees I've been part of, it was pretty normal for the ministers to come for at least two hours to make sure that, after they make their opening statements, everybody who is a member of the committee has a chance to at least have some opportunity to ask questions.

I think having supplementaries and mains all in one hour seems pretty constraining in terms of our access to the minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I think I speak for all of the opposition when I say that we would like them separated into two hours.

The Chair: Seeing no further hands raised, we will have the supplementaries on Thursday. The minister will be here for one hour, and the officials for the second hour. On March 24, the minister will be coming for the differential outcomes. We can have him for one hour for the differential outcomes, and then the second hour for the mains.

Before we adjourn the meeting, there is one committee business item we have to deal with. There has been a change to the membership of this committee. I would like to welcome the new members, Mr. Genuis and Mr. Benzen.

As Mr. Seeback is no longer a member of this committee, we need to elect a vice-chair.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

• (1325)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Chair, I nominate Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan as vice-chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other nominations?

Mr. Redekopp has nominated Mr. Jasraj Sing Hallan to be vice-chair. Is it the will of the committee to adopt this?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Congratulations, Mr. Hallan, on a very hard-fought election.

With that, the meeting is adjourned. We'll see you all on Thursday.

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