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Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann



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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)): Honourable colleagues, I call meeting No. 8 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to order.

Before we hear from representatives of Global Affairs Canada, I want to begin by acknowledging that the subject of today's meeting—Russia's military assault on Ukraine—is a heartbreaking and distressing situation, particularly for the victims of this invasion and the many Canadians who have close ties of family and friendship with the people of Ukraine.

I know that I speak for committee members—regardless of party affiliation—when I say that we are fully seized with the events in Ukraine and are mindful of the stakes involved. We understand the emergency debate this morning at the United Nations General Assembly.

We stand in full solidarity with Ukraine—a peaceful, democratic and sovereign nation—and close partner of Canada. Every day, we are seeing new frightening images, but we are also hearing incredible stories of Ukrainian resilience and bravery. Russia has brazenly attacked Ukraine without justification or provocation.

[*English*]

We are united in our condemnation of this invasion, which is both a violation of international law and a direct challenge to the rules-based order on which global peace and prosperity depend.

On this point, colleagues, I would like to thank the vice-chairs and the NDP member of the committee for their work in putting together a press release that this committee issued last week affirming our united stance against Russian aggression.

As usual, to ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

Interpretation is available through the globe icon at the bottom of your screen. For members participating in person, keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols. Please note that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

[*Translation*]

Before taking the floor, please wait for me to recognize you by name. While you have the floor, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, please put your microphone on mute.

[*English*]

I will remind you that all comments by members and our officials and witnesses today should be addressed through the chair.

Colleagues, just before we get started, it is my understanding that there are discussions among members of the committee to discuss a motion at the end of this meeting. I would like to flag that with members to see if we can carve out 10 to 15 minutes towards the end.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

[*English*]

From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we are delighted to have with us the Honourable Bob Rae, ambassador and permanent representative of Canada to the United Nations in New York. We also have Heidi Hulan, assistant deputy minister and political director of international security and political affairs; Sandra McCardell, assistant deputy minister for Europe, the Arctic, the Middle East and the Maghreb; and Julie Sunday, acting assistant deputy minister, consular, security and emergency management.

[*Translation*]

From the Department of National Defence, we welcome Major-General Paul Prévost, director of staff, strategic joint staff.

Lastly, we welcome Jean-Marc Gionet, acting director general, immigration program guidance at the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

[*English*]

We will begin with opening statements from Ambassador Rae for five minutes, after which we will move on to Major-General Prévost.

Colleagues are familiar with this. When you're down to the last 30 seconds in your speaking time, I will signal you with this yellow card. It's a very analog method of keeping time, but it has proven effective, so I ask for your indulgence in this respect.

Ambassador Rae, it is my pleasure to give you the floor for five minutes of opening remarks. Please go ahead, sir.

Hon. Bob Rae (Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations in New York, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

We're meeting at a very solemn and difficult time. I want to stress to all of you that I'm available for your questions. The only problem I may have towards the end of the period is that our slot speaking at the General Assembly is then. If it comes up, I will have to go. However, I'm ably assisted by my colleagues from the department, as well as Major-General Prévost and Mr. Gionet. I'm very much looking forward to this opportunity to speak.

We are at an incredibly serious time. The invasion of Ukraine without justification, unprovoked, is the most serious act of aggression we have seen in Europe since 1945.

• (1110)

[Translation]

As you all know very well, the situation is quite serious.

First of all, the humanitarian situation continues to worsen. Over 368,000 people have left the country as refugees, and a larger number are internally displaced within Ukraine. We are seeing around the clock what a tragic situation this is.

[English]

In my remarks, I will comment briefly on the issue of sanctions and the question of the supports we're providing to the people and the Government of Ukraine. I will look as well at our consular response. Obviously, I will keep to the time frame, so you'll have to appreciate that my comments will be somewhat abbreviated.

The first thing on sanctions that I want to stress is that many thought that western countries would not be able to come together with respect to the actions required to deal with the invasion. That has proven to be completely false. We are now seeing an unprecedented degree of co-operation and a more intense solidarity than has been present in many, many other crises. The sanctions that have been posed on Russia—on its financial institutions, on targeted individuals, on many of those seen as being responsible for what has taken place, including President Putin, his cabinet and his foreign minister—are without precedent. They are already having a most dramatic impact on the Russian economy and, unfortunately, on the Russian people, because there is no choice.

It's important to stress as well that the assistance we're providing to Ukraine is not only humanitarian. The financial assistance we've been able to provide to the government on the defence side, which General Prévost will be talking about, is a very clear indication of our support.

Let me stress that Canada's support, friendship and partnership with Ukraine date back decades. There's the support we provided during the years of oppression under the U.S.S.R.; the support we provided under Prime Minister Mulroney following the declaration of independence of Ukraine; and the support we have provided over many years in terms of trade, commerce, consular and, in particular in the last seven years, military. Canada is responsible for the training of over 30,000 members of the Ukraine armed services.

Finally, on the consular response, which Julie Sunday can speak to more directly, I just want to stress the extent to which we have truly tried to mobilize as quickly as possible in response to the seriousness of the situation.

[Translation]

We agree that there is still much work to be done.

I am now ready to answer your questions.

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure and an honour to participate in this discussion.

The Chair: Mr. Rae, thank you very much for your introductory remarks.

I will now give the floor to Major-General Prévost for five minutes.

Major-General Paul Prévost (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for inviting us this morning. It is a pleasure and an honour to participate in today's meeting for me as well.

[English]

In recent days, we've seen a devastating invasion. It's been devastating for the Ukrainian people and their armed forces. The images unfolding in front of us are difficult for the world to watch. They're difficult for Canadians and difficult for the men and women of the Canadian Forces. Since 2015, under Operation Unifier, our members have worked side by side with Ukrainians and have trained thousands of our Ukrainian counterparts to help them defend themselves against an eventuality like this one.

• (1115)

Over the recent months and weeks, we closely watched Putin prepare this terrible invasion, and for this reason we were ready. All of our troops have now been relocated from Ukraine to Poland. We will continue to look at avenues to support Ukrainian security forces in a training role when conditions allow. We have sent lethal and non-lethal aid, and we'll continue to do so in the coming days and weeks.

So far, we have sent nearly \$8 million in defensive equipment and support items. They have been delivered in full. We have also authorized the provision of an additional \$25 million in non-lethal aid, as requested by our Ukrainian counterparts.

We announced yesterday that we're sending two military transport aircraft to Europe to help NATO allies move personnel and equipment around Europe and military aid near the Ukrainian border.

We now have to turn our attention to deterrents in Europe and in North America. Under Operation Reassurance, our operation in Europe, we will bolster our NATO eastern flank by sending additional troops to Latvia, an additional frigate and a military patrol aircraft, which recently arrived in Europe. We've also placed additional troops from all of our branches—navy, army and air force—on high readiness to be able to deploy to Europe should NATO require additional capabilities.

We are still in the first five days of this crisis, and the situation is evolving quickly. I hope our contribution today will help you and our fellow Canadians understand a bit more about what we're doing in these difficult times.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Major-General Prévost.

[English]

Colleagues, we will go to the first round of our customary questions of officials and witnesses. These are allocations of six minutes each.

This morning, leading us off will be Mr. Chong. Please go ahead for six minutes.

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

Thank you, Ambassador Rae, for appearing in front of us today.

My first question concerns natural gas. Russia provides 40% of Europe's natural gas, and since early December, the Biden administration has been talking with allies and partners around the world—with countries like Norway and Qatar, for example—about providing natural gas to European democracies in the event that Russia cuts off the gas.

Canada is the world's fifth-largest natural gas producer. Have you had discussions about Canada providing natural gas to Europe with your counterparts at the UN, in the event that Russia cuts off the gas to Europe?

Hon. Bob Rae: I haven't personally, Mr. Chong. Those discussions would normally be happening with Ottawa, and not through us here in New York.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you for the answer.

I have another question that's sort of related. The U.S. administration has, for some time now, been coordinating with Scandinavian countries—I use that term very broadly—like Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland on Arctic security. As you know, we share in common with Ukraine a border with Russia, and the U.S. administration has been coordinating with these countries on Arctic security. For example, they have been staging U.S. aircraft from bases in those countries. They have also been coordinating training missions with those countries. For example, U.S. B-1 bombers have been training with Swedish and Norwegian military fighter aircraft.

I'm wondering whether or not you've participated in discussions with representatives of these nations about Canada joining these

discussions, seeing how important Canadian Arctic security and sovereignty are.

• (1120)

Hon. Bob Rae: Again, I haven't, Mr. Chong. That doesn't mean they haven't been taking place; it just means that New York is not the particular place where that's going on.

I don't know whether one of my colleagues could answer that question. Sandra, I don't know whether you or Heidi could speak to that, or maybe General Prévost.

Ms. Sandra McCardell (Assistant Deputy Minister, Europe, Arctic, Middle East and Maghreb, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Let me begin, and then I'll pass it over to General Prévost.

We have been working very closely with the United States on Arctic issues more broadly. It's one of the key elements of the road map that we have with the United States. We do that on a range of issues, but I know you're most interested in security, so I'm going to turn it over to General Prévost, who can speak in particular to some of the work going on in NORAD and other items.

General Prévost, it's over to you.

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you, Sandra.

Mr. Chair, our permanent presence in Europe is really around the Baltics in terms of our land force. We have 540 members as part of the EFP battle group. We work with Scandinavian countries in the NATO context when we exercise. There are yearly exercises to which we send components, and we recently participated with them as well.

As Sandra mentioned, most of the work we do looking at Arctic security is really with NORAD. We share the Arctic with Russia. We watch every day what they're doing in the Arctic, and we are also prepared on our side to defend on the northern side of Canada.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

In the defence of Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security, I hope we are not taking the position that the United States represents our interests with respect to Scandinavian countries. I think it's important that we stand up for our own sovereignty and security in the Arctic. I think it would be well worth considering having us deal directly, in concert with the Americans, with Scandinavian countries on Arctic security and sovereignty.

I have a final question for Ambassador Rae concerning the policy of the Canadian government with respect to lethal weapons.

The government indicated, until February 14, that it did not support providing lethal weapons, and the Prime Minister indicated that the reason was that the solution was diplomatic and not military. Then, on February 14, the Prime Minister announced a change in course and said the government would provide \$7.8 million of lethal weaponry to Ukraine. In the last several days, the government has announced that it is providing non-lethal military equipment to Ukraine.

Was the February 14 announcement a one-off change in policy, or is the government now open to sending additional lethal weaponry to Ukraine?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Chair, I discussed this question directly with the Minister of National Defence over the weekend. I have frequent conversations with her, as I do with Minister Joly and other ministers.

The position of the government is that it's reviewing this question every day. As General Prévost said, we have been directly assisting our friends in NATO—through the supply of the two large transport planes over the last 48 hours—to provide as much assistance to Ukraine as possible through NATO, and the minister is in contact with the Ukrainian minister of national defence on a daily basis.

So I think you can say that this situation is being watched very carefully. Other countries—Germany and the Netherlands, for example—have made some announcements with respect to changes to their policy and their determination to deliver weaponry to Ukraine. That, frankly, has followed on from much of what we've done.

I think it's fair to say that over a long period of time, as General Prévost has stated, our main focus has been on training, which has been remarkably effective in building up the capacity of the Ukrainian military.

The Chair: Mr. Chong, we'll have to leave it there. Thanks very much.

Thank you, Ambassador Rae.

[*Translation*]

I'll now give the floor to Ms. Bendayan for six minutes.

• (1125)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of all committee members and the government, I would like to once again thank the major-general.

[*English*]

I would also like to welcome you and thank you, Ambassador Rae. We have all been following your interventions at the General Assembly, and I would like to thank you for representing Canada so well at the United Nations.

Indeed, Canada has taken a leadership role in supporting Ukraine, as you mentioned earlier, and over the last number of weeks that leadership has intensified. Not only have we been among the first countries to provide humanitarian aid and assistance—in addition to our Operation Unifier and Operation Reassur-

ance, which had already been on the ground for a number of years—but we have also provided both lethal weaponry and non-lethal weaponry to Ukraine at their request, and we are leading the way in asking that Russia be removed entirely from SWIFT.

That being said, I wonder what specific sanctions Canada and the international community could impose that we have not imposed as of yet.

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm not going to speculate on that, except to say that whatever we do, we do in concert with others.

Obviously there are some institutions that have yet to be named, and there are some individuals who have yet to be named, but I'm not going to speculate publicly about what or who they might be. I think there's a very clear determination—unparalleled, really, in modern history—on the part of the G7 countries and other countries to take steps to make the sanctions effective.

Just in the last 24 hours, Switzerland has announced that it's imposing sanctions of a financial nature on Russia, which you can appreciate is an entirely unprecedented action by the Swiss government.

I think that's a reflection of the amount of common effort that has been involved in getting us to where we are now.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

I note that Ukraine's president recently asked us to try to remove Russia from the UN Security Council. We saw, obviously, the impact of Russia's veto a few days ago. While I understand that there are enormous challenges with such an endeavour, I wonder if you could speak a bit to the possibilities that exist, either at the UN or in other international organizations, to isolate Russia diplomatically.

Hon. Bob Rae: I think the isolation of Russia is happening. We'll see in the next two days votes in the General Assembly, in which Russia does not have a veto. We'll see discussions taking place at the Human Rights Council, where Minister Joly is today in Geneva, which I think will similarly reflect a very substantial isolation. In our view, a full human rights inquiry should be carried out on what has happened.

The notion of expelling Russia from the Security Council, from the UN is.... I think the word is “challenging”, simply because of the charter. Russia has a veto in the normal course of events, and expulsion of a member requires the support of the Security Council, which means that Russia could again veto it. The views of the General Assembly would have to be expressed by two-thirds of the members. Again, we'll see as we start to lobby and discuss with the 193 members of the UN how they're feeling about these issues. That itself may be difficult.

Let me be very clear: Canada's position is that we're not in favour of the veto at all as an instrument, and we have been working hard in expressing that view, together with a number of other like-minded countries.

The UN is a very imperfect instrument at the best of times, partly because of the structures that were created in 1945. Because of the way in which the Security Council's efforts have been so systematically stymied by the abuse of the veto, that is obviously something we have to work at all the time. Given the five countries that allegedly were responsible for victory in 1945.... I say "allegedly", because a number of us were involved in that, which is why Canada was not supportive of the veto at that time and is not supportive of it now. It was essentially imposed on us by the big five, and we're still living with that structure.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: At this very moment, talks are under way at the border between Ukraine and Belarus. We also know that, this weekend, a referendum was held in Belarus to authorize the Belarusian government to host Russian nuclear weapons.

Ambassador, could you comment on this situation and tell us about its potential repercussions on the conflict?

Hon. Bob Rae: Given that Belarus is a country under illegal occupation by the Russians, it is naturally important for the world to ensure that new countries do not have access to nuclear weapons. This remains a concern for Canada.

Concerning the discussions between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, no ceasefire was agreed upon, which means that the war is continuing. Even though discussions are ongoing, children are still being killed by Russian soldiers. That makes the discussion even more important, but we don't exactly know what the end result will be.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ambassador and Ms. Bendayan.

Mr. Bergeron, you have six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for joining us today. It's important that we have the opportunity to discuss this matter with you, in part to signal our unwavering support for the people of Ukraine. You are all very busy these days; we are therefore even more grateful to you for taking the time to join us this morning to talk about the ongoing situation.

I particularly want to welcome His Excellency, the Ambassador of Canada to the United Nations. Given the fact that a special session of the UN General Assembly is being held this morning, we are even more appreciative of his appearance before the committee.

Ambassador, you mentioned a few moments ago that a transport plane was a major component of the contribution that we are sending. As far as I know, it is a maritime surveillance aircraft.

Could this aircraft also be used for transport purposes to support the Ukrainians, or is it just a maritime surveillance aircraft?

Hon. Bob Rae: I'll give the floor to Major-General Prévost, since he has a better idea of what is happening.

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you, Ambassador.

As the Prime Minister announced a few weeks ago, a maritime patrol aircraft was sent to strengthen security in Europe. It was part of the announcement about the additional frigate and troops that we are sending to Latvia.

Yesterday, it was announced that two additional transport aircraft were being sent. These CC-130H Hercules planes will allow NATO to transport NATO staff and equipment throughout Europe, in order to better reposition our forces. Furthermore, these planes will be available to all of our allies if they need to send military assistance to the Ukrainian border. We will use these aircraft to transport this military assistance.

I hope that that answers your question.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It does indeed. Thank you very much for those additional details, Major-General Prévost.

Unless I am mistaken, I got the impression that you carefully avoided Ms. Bendayan's important question about possible additional sanctions that could be imposed by western allies and Canada.

Could you please shed light on the additional measures that could be taken to apply more pressure to Russia, of course, but also to Belarus? As the ambassador has stated, children, women, the elderly and civilians continue to be killed during these ongoing negotiations.

That leads me to a related question. What more would it take in the Russian intervention for us to impose stricter sanctions?

• (1135)

Hon. Bob Rae: I hope it didn't seem as though I was avoiding your question. That is never my intention. Having spent a lot of time in the House of Commons, I never appreciated when people would dodge a question, so I don't want to be one of them.

As I said in response to Ms. Bendayan's question, some banks, institutions and individuals have yet to be named.

The effectiveness of the sanctions will depend to a great extent on consensus. When I'm asked whether additional sanctions could be imposed, my answer is that it's certainly possible. Many others have said the same.

However, I can't provide a more specific answer because we haven't yet reached the consensus needed to take things further, but I think we'll get there.

The news out of Russia and Belarus is clearly showing the economic and financial consequences on the situation in Russia.

Will we see repercussions tomorrow? Yes, we will. Will they be enough? We don't know yet, but we will keep up our efforts, I have no doubt.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you very much.

In answering this next question, could you explain what would have to happen on the ground in order for Canada to decide to go further with the sanctions and build the consensus needed?

I want to follow up on the question Mr. Chong asked a little while ago.

Even before the invasion, Canada had reservations about supplying Ukraine with lethal weapons, so as not to give Russia an excuse to attack Ukraine.

However, Russia did attack, so why is Canada still reluctant to send lethal weapons to Ukraine?

Hon. Bob Rae: There isn't any reluctance. I didn't hear any reservations expressed when I spoke with Ms. Anand, the Minister of National Defence. I think the most important thing to do is identify what Ukraine needs and what our partner countries are doing to deal with the problem. We are in the process of examining everything we can do to heighten the impact of our assistance to Ukraine. Two weeks ago, we decided to take the necessary measures to help Ukraine, and we will continue to do so.

I want to make two things clear. First, the sanctions we imposed on Russia are unprecedented in modern history. Second, the military and financial assistance we have provided to Ukraine is also unprecedented.

Will it be enough for Ukraine to confront the invasion from Russia, one of the world's biggest military powers? We don't know, but the incredible courage, resilience and leadership shown by President Zelenskyy are undeniable, and we will continue to support him however we can.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Rae.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: It's now my pleasure to give the floor to Don Davies.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Davies. Go ahead for six minutes, please.

• (1140)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Thank you.

It's great to see you, Ambassador Rae. It was always a privilege to serve with you in the House of Commons.

Ambassador, I think the whole world is deeply concerned about the nuclear threat. I have a two-part question for you. First, what is your analysis of Mr. Putin's nuclear statement? Second, given that Canada has refused to join the nuclear ban treaty, might this be an opportune time for Canada to rethink that position, in your view?

Hon. Bob Rae: On the first question, Mr. Chair, I would say that in January, Russia joined the four other nuclear powers—the United States, China, France and the U.K.—to indicate that a nuclear war could never be won, and that there was no justification for the use of nuclear weapons. It was a statement made on the eve of a UN conference that didn't happen because of COVID, but it was still a very important statement.

This took place in January 2022. We're not talking about five years ago; we're talking about six or seven weeks ago, so when President Putin turns around and makes the announcement that he made yesterday, what are we to make of it?

I think it's deeply irrational, and I think that at a moment of greater rationality, this is what Russia said, and now we have Russia saying something completely different. It's a complete turnaround from what they said before.

I also think it's important for us not to be scared off by this tactic, though, because I think it is a tactic. I saw great big headlines in many newspapers. The Washington Post this morning had an enormous headline saying that Russia threatens nuclear...etc., but I think it's really important not to give in to what it's intended to do. It's intended to make us all back off. Everything I have seen, in any conversation I've had with members of cabinet or any of my colleagues here at the United Nations, no one is getting turned away by this. It's important for us to stay resolute, to stay strong and to stay determined.

On your second point, the question for Canada is that we are a member of a military alliance called NATO. NATO remains an alliance that includes certain countries that have nuclear weapons. The government has taken the position that this circumstance somewhat limits what we can say.

However, I think that since 1945 Canada's position on nuclear weaponry has been very clear, with perhaps the most important aspect, which I would stress because it's often not stressed, being that Canada unilaterally made a decision at the end of the Second World War that it would not become a nuclear power. Now, you might ask how likely that would have been anyway. It actually would have been quite possible. We could have been. We had the means; we had the technology and we had the science. Many of the nuclear scientists trained at Chalk River. We were in a position to do so, and we decided unilaterally that we would not do that.

Certain other countries—South Africa and others—made a similar decision. I'm glad we made that decision, and I think it should be clear that we have no intention of engaging in that kind of activity.

Mr. Don Davies: Thanks, Mr. Rae.

I want to turn to humanitarian assistance.

We're pleased to see the \$10 million in funding to match funds raised by the Red Cross, but I think it's fair to say that it's a drop in the bucket in terms of the need. The UNHCR this morning said that over 500,000 people have fled Ukraine and many more are displaced internally. Can you tell us if additional humanitarian funds to Ukraine will be provided?

As importantly, can you confirm that those funds will not be diverted from the existing humanitarian envelope, given that we have so many other crises—Afghanistan, Syria and the Rohingya crisis, which I know you're very familiar with—that continue to necessitate Canada's attention?

Hon. Bob Rae: On the first point, Mr. Chair, I can give Mr. Davies my assurance that there will be more forthcoming. That's guaranteed.

The UN humanitarian agency, OCHA, which is the coordinating body for all the humanitarian work we do, is putting out a call for a large contribution. There will be a resolution in the General Assembly this week, which is being prepared by Mexico and France, that will do the same, and it will clearly call for a very substantial donation by member countries. Canada is always in the top 10 of humanitarian donors, always, and we will continue to do that.

As for your second question, my answer—and I know you're not going to be satisfied with this—is that it's above my pay grade. I can't guarantee what the budget of the Government of Canada will be, but I can guarantee that Canada will be a contributor, and I can express a hope from the trenches that we don't rob Peter to pay Paul. I think that would be a bad precedent.

• (1145)

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you.

The U.K. announced a registry of foreign entities that would require the true owners of real estate to be revealed. I think you retweeted that announcement. Is that something you think we should be doing in Canada, Mr. Rae?

Hon. Bob Rae: If you look at my tweets, you'll see that it says very carefully that these are my personal views. It occasionally gets me into trouble.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron knows that quite well.

[*English*]

I hope we do, though. A lot of things have happened in the last several weeks that I hope are making it easier for things that need to be done to get done. I think we have to know where property is registered. I think we have to know who it belongs to. For our own security and for our own interests, this is valuable information. I think we should have it.

Mr. Don Davies: Chair, can I squeeze in one more quick question?

The Chair: Yes, very quick. I gave some indulgence to your colleagues, so yes, if it's very quick—30 seconds or less.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you. I'll make it a really quick one.

Ukrainians don't require visas to travel to 141 countries, including most of Europe. The NDP has been calling for visa-free travel for Ukrainians for some years. Is Canada considering doing this? Why are we so hesitant to offer visa-free travel to Ukrainians?

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm going to put Monsieur Gionet on the spot. He's the representative from IRCC. I know that the minister is looking at whatever means he can to facilitate.

I don't know.... Is Mr. Gionet there?

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet (Director General, Immigration Program Guidance, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Yes. We are indeed taking a number of steps to support Ukrainians and people residing in Ukraine, to make it easier and faster for them to come to Canada. We announced on the 24th a number of steps to facilitate access to and prioritization of their immigration applications, and we're going to continue to look for ways to facili-

tate it as the situation evolves, but the Ukrainian visa requirements are currently not under review.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Davies.

Ambassador Rae, it's my understanding that you may have to leave us prior to the end of our full session. We're hoping that we can have you for at least part of our next round. Without further ado, we will go right into that.

Leading us off for five minutes is Mr. Morantz, please.

Go ahead.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador and GAC officials, for being here. It has been a very informative meeting.

Mr. Ambassador, a few minutes ago, when asked about Mr. Putin's announcement about his nuclear options, you characterized it as being “deeply irrational”. I have to agree. I and many people think this whole situation is deeply irrational.

I realize that you can't get inside Mr. Putin's head, but I wonder if you have an opinion on his mental state. Also, when someone is behaving this way within any organization, there are often cracks within the organization itself. I'm wondering if you have any knowledge of—or if you might even want to speculate about—what might be going on in Putin's inner circle around this odd behaviour.

Hon. Bob Rae: I would prefer not to get into that, Mr. Chair, not because I'm avoiding the question, but because, as we say in court, I think it asks for speculation on my part.

I would say this, however. I have been following Mr. Putin for a long time—what he says and what he does—and I've found that, particularly with respect to this issue of Ukraine, his attitude is terrible. He keeps saying that Ukraine and Russia are one people. He keeps saying that Ukraine is not a real place, not a real state. He denies the existence of a separate Ukrainian people, a separate identity, a separate language. That is what I find most offensive and most dangerous.

He also says things like, “You're making us do this.” He puts his finger on the nuclear button and says, “You're making me do this.” Well, that is the language of an abuser. It is like somebody who is an abuser saying, “I'm only hitting you because you're making me hit you.” It is dangerous talk. It is irrational talk.

Most importantly, though, with respect to the politics of this situation, the denial of the existence of the Ukrainian nation is a prelude to hate speech. Obviously, it precedes all these actions he's taken, and I think it leads to the awful situation in which the world finds itself and in which the people of Ukraine find themselves.

It's also fair to say, Mr. Chair, that the purpose of the sanctions and the purpose of what I've called our unprecedented level of overall NATO assistance to Ukraine is an attempt to convince the Russian people and the people around Mr. Putin that what he is doing is wrong and is not going to work. It's self-destructive. That's the message we're trying to send over and over again.

• (1150)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

It may be that one of the GAC officials could answer this question with regard to sanctions. I know that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been saying all along that Canada needs to be in lock-step with our allies. I have to say at the outset that I am commending the incredible efforts of our allies to bring in very strong sanctions, but there are a couple of issues where there's a bit of daylight. I'm wondering if I could get an explanation for that.

For example, Vladimir Putin's son-in-law, Kirill Shamalov, a wealthy Russian oligarch in his own right, was sanctioned by the U.K., Australia and the United States, but not by Canada. Alena Georgieva, the chairwoman of a bank owned by a Russian arms manufacturer, was also on allied lists but not ours. I'm wondering if you could give an explanation as to why.

Hon. Bob Rae: I can't, but maybe Heidi Hulan can, so I'll leave it to her.

Ms. Heidi Hulan (Assistant Deputy Minister and Political Director, International Security and Political Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Ambassador.

Good morning to the members of the committee.

In fact, it's my colleague Sandra McCardell who will answer this in detail, but I can say that I participate in very regular consultations among G7 political directors. We talk about co-operation on sanctions, but we all have slightly different systems and slightly different research teams. Just because things are not fully aligned to the name today doesn't mean that they will not be aligned and that they're not *grosso modo* aligned at this point.

The Chair: Mr. Morantz, that's five minutes. If you have a very quick follow-up, I'll let you get that in.

Hon. Bob Rae: Sandra, do you have an additional point that you want to make there?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Given the shortness of time, I think Heidi has answered that very adequately.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

You'll have a chance to follow up in—

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Chair, is it possible to get an answer to that question in writing, since my time is up? It would be specifically addressing Mr. Shamalov and Ms. Georgieva.

The Chair: Yes, we can request that it be provided in writing. I think that's expedient. Thank you for that, Mr. Morantz.

We will now go to Dr. Fry, please, for five minutes.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Good morning, everybody. I'd like to thank you all for being here.

Welcome, Excellency, to our meeting.

I want to ask what might sound like a naive question. Ukraine wanted to join NATO. So does Finland. Of course, Finland is extremely at risk right now. Given where we all are, given that all the allies, including all the NATO allies, are on the page for moving forward with a defensive mechanism, why don't we let them join? Why doesn't everyone agree to have them join? Can that happen?

Hon. Bob Rae: The issue of NATO membership is determined by all the members. I think it's fair to say that there may not have been complete unanimity before about which countries should join or whether indeed there was a formal application to join. In order for things to happen, you need a formal application and process of discussion. Whether that happens now, I don't know.

I'm sure there will be discussions, not only about NATO membership but also about EU membership. I think President Zelenskyy made it very clear, in his public announcements the last few days, that he's looking to that, and many European countries have said they're eager to have Ukraine join the EU, which in many respects has historically been just as important to Ukraine as membership in NATO.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you. I thought that might allow NATO to suddenly defend Ukraine on its own territory because of this. That's why I asked the question.

I know about the diplomatic processes that we have to go through as we're doing talks, but Putin himself has shown that he's not to be trusted. You know the old saying, "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." There was the 1991 Budapest assurance with regard to nuclear disarmament in Kazakhstan and Ukraine, which made them give up all their nuclear armaments in order to be assured that their territorial integrity would be protected. He reneged on that. He then came into Crimea. He's then sitting around at Minsk talks, and everything he says cannot be trusted.

Why are we trusting that this man will not be unstable enough to press that nuclear button? It doesn't seem to me that he's a stable human being. I think he's the kind of guy who, when he's backed into a corner, will do anything to fight back. Why are we trusting these talks that are being held today? Do we think they'll amount to anything? Are we concerned that he will demand certain things that might make him in fact keep his nuclear threat going? I am concerned about that piece.

• (1155)

Hon. Bob Rae: The talks that are taking place in northern Ukraine on the border with Belarus are taking place between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Russia. They're not taking the place with NATO or anybody else.

It was President Zelenskyy who asked for a meeting, and then they debated about where it would be and the terms and conditions of the meeting. They are having talks without any conditions, following his insistence on that, and that means no ceasefire. That's the reason that we have this very dangerous situation still under way.

I don't think it's about trusting Mr. Putin. I don't trust him. For me, as an individual, if he says something.... Many things he says I know are not true, so there is no reason to trust him. I don't think it's about trust. It's about the fact that there will have to be some kind of compromise or something happen that will allow for a resolution of this crisis, or else it will be a fight to the bitter end, and that's not something anybody wants to see.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I agree. However, we have watched him amassing his military might, including in the Arctic and around Ukraine, for a long time now. Why weren't we more prepared for this? Why wasn't NATO putting its forces in NATO countries and the Baltics, etc., to be ready for this moment, knowing that it could easily happen with this unstable man?

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm not sure I can answer that question easily, except to make a general point, and that is, I think it's true that many countries did not take the threat of a Russian invasion as seriously as we all should have. I'm not being critical of any one country or another, but I think there will be lots of historians who want the answer. However, right now we're in the middle of a battle, and it's a battle for the lives of the Ukrainian people. The moments for analysis or reanalysis or reconsideration will come later. Right now we're at the coal face, and it's a very tough place to be.

The Chair: We'll have to leave it there, Dr. Fry.

Thank you, Ambassador Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm afraid I have to go, Mr. Chair. I apologize to the members of the committee.

However, my very able colleagues will be able to answer, perhaps less provocatively than me. I can see them looking at me rather uneasily as I answer.

The Chair: Ambassador Rae, on our collective behalf, thank you for your time this morning. Thank you for your service and your expertise. We wish you well. We are following your work very closely.

Hon. Bob Rae: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Honourable members, we now go to Mr. Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I can't tell you how disappointed I am, Mr. Chair, that Ambassador Rae has just left us. I was going to ask him about a comment he made during an interview with RDI on Saturday. He said that the time had come for Russia's political, mil-

itary and business elite to speak directly with their leaders and tell them that the situation had gone too far.

I'm not sure whether any of you is able to answer the question I had for Mr. Rae. Is there any reason to think that the members of Russia's military, political and business elite are mobilizing in the wake of the sanctions?

• (1200)

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Since Ambassador Rae isn't here, I will answer that, Mr. Chair.

What we are seeing is an extraordinary unified response on the part of our partners and allies. It is commonly being said that Russia has given the west and NATO a new purpose. As we are seeing, the sanctions are having a significant impact. Already today, we are seeing the effects on Russia's economy, its currency. That creates pressure within Russia. That's exactly what we wanted, not just to affect the elite Mr. Bergeron described, but also to weaken Russia's capacity to mount operations like the one happening now.

Unfortunately, we can't see inside the Russian regime. What we do know, though, is that the effects of the unified response of Canada and its partners—the sanctions, political pressure and so forth—are really being felt on the ground in Russia. It goes [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] the sanctions can have a greater impact.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you so much. Sorry [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Along the same lines, I want to follow up on a question Mr. Morantz asked a little while ago.

When Alexei Navalny's chief of staff, Léonid Volkov, appeared before the committee, he gave us a list of oligarchs who should be the first ones targeted by western sanctions. According to the information we have, there are people on that list who have still not been targeted by sanctions, including Canadian sanctions.

I imagine the answer is yes, but is Canada still planning to impose sanctions on those oligarchs who surround Mr. Putin and support what he's doing?

The Chair: Please keep your answer brief.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: We have that very list put together by Mr. Navalny.

As Ambassador Rae mentioned, we are still working with our allies and partners on potential targets that could help bring significant pressure to bear on the Russian regime. We have not exhausted all of our measures, but I would point out that it's important to see what the impact of the sanctions we have already imposed will be. The political impact of sanctions may be immediate, but the economic impact takes longer to be felt.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McCardell and Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

I will now give the floor to Don Davies for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you.

I'd like to come back briefly to the nuclear ban treaty. Ambassador Rae went to great pains to tie NATO into this. I know the first members' meeting of state parties to the treaty is coming up. Other NATO countries are, I am informed, sending observer delegations to that treaty.

Are there any plans for Canada to do so as well?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: We follow developments on the treaty with great care and interest, and we are constantly collaborating with colleagues on all sides of this debate. I have to tell you that I'm not at this instant in possession of an answer to your question, but we would be happy to follow up with the committee.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you.

In answer to my question about visa-free travel for Ukrainians, I think the very end of the statement said that it's not under review. Could I get that clarified? What exactly does that mean?

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: I think it's important to give a bit more context, as I was pressed for time in the response.

To give an overview of the measures we currently have in place to facilitate the travel of Ukrainians—

Mr. Don Davies: With respect, I'm not looking for context. I'm specifically looking for an answer to the question of why we are not considering giving visa-free travel to Ukrainians in these circumstances, given that 141 countries have done so. I'm not interested in hearing other things that we're doing; I want to know why we're not considering that.

• (1205)

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: In response to that question, Mr. Chair, the reality is that we have existing pathways and are expediting the processing of immigration applications for Ukrainians and persons residing in Ukraine. We are putting them all at the front of the queue. We have put in place measures to waive fees, but we still have to ensure that we do the proper vetting and screening of those applications, even though they are being prioritized and put at the front of the queue. We want to make sure we are able to maximize the use of the pathways that exist.

Mr. Don Davies: I'm sorry to belabour this, but if 141 countries do not require visas, I'm wondering what the rationale is for Canada to still require a visa. What is the concern?

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: Again, the assessment is done on a country-by-country basis, and at the moment it is not under review.

The Chair: Mr. Davies, thank you very much.

We will go to Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

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

I won't repeat the question, but I want to say on the record that Conservatives are supportive of and have called for the lifting of the visa requirement as well. It was part of a comprehensive statement that we released on the weekend. Hopefully the government will respond to the calls from multiple opposition parties.

I was going to ask Mr. Rae about his views on war crimes committed by Mr. Putin and by other actors within the Russian military. He has said that he believes that war crimes have taken place. I'd like some clarity from officials on whether that was a personal view or the government's view and what the government's view is with respect to whether Mr. Putin is a war criminal and whether war crimes have been committed in the context of this conflict.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Mr. Chair, in any conflict, and particularly one involving civilians as directly as this one has, there needs to be a real concern about the possibility of war crimes.

What I can assure the chair is that we are, as we speak, engaging our legal experts with those from other countries to look very closely at this. You're likely aware that Ukraine itself is already calling for a case at the ICJ related to Russia's invocation of genocide as a justification for its actions. We were working very closely already with our Ukrainian colleagues on, for example, the work of PS752. As well, we are working with our legal colleagues from the Netherlands, with whom we have worked on Syria and Myanmar.

That's to say we're absolutely live to this question; it's important. We need to be very certain of [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] going forward, and of the facts that can be collected on the ground.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If I can jump in, you're alive to the question or the possibility. Okay. It sounds like you are not prepared to say that war crimes have taken place, but you believe further investigation is merited. Is that a correct summation of the position of the government?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: What's important is that we are able to document what's happening on the ground. If it meets the threshold, it needs to be pursued in the correct avenues. We are working with our legal colleagues to make sure that happens.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. I regret that Mr. Rae is not here anymore, because he specifically tweeted five hours ago “war crimes”, with reference to reports of “[d]ozens killed by indiscriminate Russian shelling in...Kharkiv”.

Mr. Rae is saying “war crimes”, and you are saying we need investigations with respect to claims of war crimes. That's not a question; that's a statement of fact, I suppose.

Would you say that Mr. Rae is speaking in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the government when he says that?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: What's important is that Canada works very closely to understand what's happening on the ground.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. I want to ask about the protests that are happening inside Russia—the growing Russian opposition.

Has the Government of Canada issued statements with respect specifically to internal Russian opposition? What does the government see as steps that Canada could take in support of the Russian opposition in this moment? Is the government in talks with key Russian opposition figures about these issues?

• (1210)

Ms. Sandra McCardell: In terms of what's happening inside Russia, we're watching this really closely. It's important. As you know, we have been very supportive in the past of a number of those who've had the courage to stand up to President Putin.

The circumstances are really challenging. As you have seen, a number of those individuals have been arrested or otherwise silenced by President Putin, so how we engage needs to be done in a way that is very respectful of their security.

The other part we're looking at really closely is around the broad question of disinformation. Minister Joly has been very keen to have that issue raised forward. It was raised at the G7 ministers meeting on Saturday. We need to get real facts into Russia, and we need to be able to support those who have a voice of opposition.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. Please add my voice to those who are calling for us to engage with and support the Russian opposition. One key way we can do that is by following through on Navalny's recommendations with respect to sanctions. I echo the calls from many of my colleagues that we sanction, now, those who are part of Navalny's list. Frankly, I think we should have done that prior to this invasion.

Mr. Chair, I think that's my time.

The Chair: That is spot on, Mr. Genuis. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. McCardell.

We will now go to Mr. Oliphant, please, for five minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our officials for their work, in all departments, in continuing to follow this minute by minute, day by day, as a crisis that is unprecedented in our lifetimes in terms of threatening our own peace and security as well as that of friends and neighbours.

Following up on some of the discussions that have happened in today's meeting, as well as this progression of sanctions and other measures that have been taking place, I want to push a bit more on other sanctions.

I am now speaking as the member of Parliament for Don Valley West more than as parliamentary secretary, because I have those two roles in my head. As a member of Parliament, I am wanting our government to push further. I am very clear about that. The limits on that, obviously, are that we need to do this in lockstep with allies, with the like-minded, and that we keep building that momentum towards a constant approach.

Are there other options on the table that we can continue to work with our allies on in terms of sanctions that could reach deep into the economy and the fabric of Russia?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Mr. Chair, as I mentioned before, we are looking at other ways we can work with our partners to put additional pressure on Russia, and those will absolutely include sanctions.

I would take note of other tools that are available and that have been putting pressure on Russia as well. Certainly we're seeing con-

sumer groups. We saw the announcement today about products from Russia. We have seen Rogers and Bell announce that they will no longer carry Russia Today. There's a real swelling of popular support for Ukraine, which has a multiplier effect for things we as government can do.

The other thing we as a government need to do is to make sure the sanctions that are in place are implemented properly. Canada is joining a transatlantic task force with the U.S. and the EU to essentially get our technicians and departments together to look very carefully at where the assets are and to work to make sure the sanctions we put in place are effective and are being implemented.

We've also seen, as Ambassador Rae mentioned, that Switzerland, certainly one of the financial centres of Europe, is on board.

We're looking at more sanctions. We're looking at making sure that the sanctions we have are biting and are being implemented properly. We're also looking at essentially being a model for that kind of broader groundswell of world citizens who are following what is happening in Russia.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you very much.

That shows the concerted effort that officials and our political leaders have taken on this issue to ensure that we move not simply passionately but also logically, realistically and concertedly with our allies.

With respect to that, in terms of military intervention and further support, I was obviously very pleased to see that we are sending additional non-lethal equipment and supplies to help Ukrainians in this battle.

I'll turn now to our DND folks. Can you say what other areas we could be considering over the coming days or weeks that could help? I know we have responded to Ukraine's requests early, and I'm just wondering if there are other things you are beginning to consider that we as parliamentarians should be mindful of.

• (1215)

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Chair.

We are constantly looking at what we can do. We are looking at what we have right now, and you will have seen that we've sent four flights already in recent weeks, with lethal and non-lethal aid. We are continuing to look at what we can do inside of the fence to provide more. The minister was clear about that yesterday. I believe my colleagues from Foreign Affairs may have a bit more on yesterday's announcement regarding the \$25 million.

We'll continue to do what we can, but it's important to remember that Canada's best contribution has been to be the strongest ally for Ukraine since 2015. We have the biggest presence in the training missions. That is Canada's best contribution. We're glad to see that our allies are now sending more aid to theatre. We've been there from the beginning and we will continue to do whatever we can to help the Ukrainians.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you very much. I wanted you to say that.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Major-General Prévost.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

We will now go to our next round, our third round, and we'll lead off with a five-minute allocation for Mr. Aboultaif.

Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thanks to the witnesses.

With respect to immigration, I'm sure most of us have a large number of respectful communities, and people are asking about what could happen in terms of immigration, because no matter how the military operation and war end, at the end of the day there will be many displaced people within Ukraine; some have already left the country.

The question is, probably for Mr. Gionet, how ready are we to assist Ukrainians who want to come here, or families who want to sponsor or bring their relatives here? Do you have any idea? Are we ready? Do we have preparations for the numbers?

If you could brief us on that, it would be great.

Ms. Julie Sunday (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Consular, Security and Emergency Management, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Mr. Chair, I can answer this from a consular perspective, which will deal with some of the request but not all of it, obviously.

We are providing consular services to Canadian citizens, permanent residents and their dependants, or their immediate family members. Our embassies in the region are ready to help them get out of Ukraine. We have our emergency watch and response centre fully activated. People can call 24-7. If a Canadian passport is required, the emergency watch and response centre can help coordinate issuance with consular officials at border checkpoints in Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. We also have an office right now in Rzeszow, Poland, which is close to the border. We are working with embassies in Warsaw, Bucharest, Vienna and Budapest to provide essential services to Canadians and their family members and permanent residents and their family members. We're well positioned and are providing that support.

We also have our standing rapid deployment team, which is sort of a surge team that we're able to bring into the region very quickly. They require only four hours' notice to move and to bolster our resources at the borders to help move any of these complex consular cases or family cases forward—

• (1220)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Do you have any idea of the number of cases we've seen in the last few days? You must have some record of that.

Ms. Julie Sunday: We've seen a surge in our calls. There's been a significant number of calls. Right now we have 1,045 Canadians registered on our formal ROCA, our registration of Canadians abroad. This number is likely low, because this is a voluntary registration. Certainly we are there. We are available for people to reach out to us directly. We have been publicizing how to get in touch

with us. IRCC also has a phone line set up. They would be dealing with visa and immigration requests there.

The last thing I would mention is that we also launched a crisis website on February 19. People can go there and get border information or information on public health requirements, etc.

I can tell you that in Poland documentation is not an issue. People are getting out. The borders are very permissive right now. Certainly, people are getting across if they want to.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Is there any special consideration being given to the crisis? Are we prepared to take half a million people, let's say, if necessary?

Ms. Julie Sunday: I would have to refer that question to my colleague at IRCC, but we are ready to support Canadians.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Could you send us something on that?

Chair, in the 30 seconds I have left, I have a question for Monsieur Prévost, on the operation on the ground.

What do you make of the assessment so far from the last few days? Do you believe President Putin probably thought it would be much quicker than the time it's taking, with the resistance of the Ukrainian people and army?

MGen Paul Prévost: To give you a rapid answer in the time you have left, we agree. We think Mr. Putin thought it would go faster. Obviously, there's been some back-and-forth along all fronts. Tracking the offensive against Kyiv, they're probably not going as fast as they thought, and the same against Kharkiv and also moving to the south, into Crimea.

You are correct. It seems as though it's not moving as fast as he may have thought.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Aboultaif and Major-General Prévost.

The floor now goes to Mr. Ehsassi for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to thank all the witnesses for being here today. It's been very, very helpful.

I will begin with you, Ms. Hulan. As you know, we have all witnessed the United Nations fall into dysfunction because of Russia's veto. The General Assembly will be taking up this issue. I'm wondering whether it is the position of our government to liaise with members of the General Assembly to ensure that hopefully we can get a very strong resolution out of the General Assembly and that as many members of the international community...are on board.

Could you shed some light on what we are doing in New York?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Yes. Thanks very much for that question, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to take the opportunity of having the floor to respond to the earlier question about the removal of Russia from the Security Council. That is a move that would require two-thirds of the General Assembly, as Ambassador Rae said, but also ratification by all permanent members of the Security Council, so it would require that Russia agree to its own removal from the Security Council. I just wanted to clarify the charter rules there.

The answer to your question is, yes, we are very actively engaging in the General Assembly with a view to building the broadest possible support for a resolution in the General Assembly, of which we are co-drafters within the core group, and to shrink the diplomatic support on which President Putin has been able to draw in the broader community. We are looking for positive votes and we are working [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you.

I would like to ask Ms. McCardell a question.

Ms. McCardell, as you know, there are going to be many ramifications to Russia's assault on Ukraine. The reality of the matter is that Ukraine has been the breadbasket of Europe, with agricultural exports to numerous countries, particularly in the Middle East. Would you mind sharing with us some of the concerns that we should be focused on as we deal with the terrible consequences of this invasion, and in particular in countries in the Middle East?

• (1225)

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Look, I think it's clear that as horrible as what is happening in Ukraine is, there will be a lot of ramifications across the globe, whether it be energy prices or food security, which we will need to be addressing and preparing for.

On the specific question of food prices in the Middle East, we are very concerned about this. As you likely already know, these are areas that are highly prone to instability, where the balance between meeting daily subsistence and not is a precarious one. Even slight changes in the food prices can make a big difference to daily lives, but also to stability in fragile countries. You can only imagine what this means in a country like Lebanon, for example, which has already seen the devastation of its economy.

What I would say is that we have development programs in these countries. We are looking at humanitarian options in some countries like Lebanon, where we already have humanitarian contributions. We will be working with the World Food Programme and other UN agencies to see how we can provide basic subsistence if it comes to that.

The bottom line is that we need to be ready for the economic fallout of this conflict on a number of countries that are still fragile, either from internal instability or from the impact of COVID. Quite frankly, this is happening at a terrible time for all kinds of reasons, but certainly, for a number of countries, they will find themselves really precariously positioned. I couldn't agree more with that observation.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you very much for that.

Now, if I could turn the attention to Ukraine itself, the international community is currently asking for unfettered humanitarian access to Ukraine. Could you unpack that for us and tell us what our vision or the vision of our allies is of that unfettered access? How likely is it that we will see some progress on that front?

The Chair: Could we have just a brief answer, please, in the interest of time?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Sure.

Unfettered access means exactly how it sounds. We believe that humanitarian agencies should be able to get to the people in need. This is a question that is beginning to emerge across Ukraine. We'll be working closely with our UN partners, who are very experienced in working in difficult environments and are well placed, as are other groups like the ICRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross. We will be supporting them. We'll be working with our like-minded partners to put pressure to ensure that humanitarian access gets to the people who need it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ehsassi.

[*Translation*]

Over to you, Mr. Bergeron. You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I want to revisit the issue of military assistance to Ukraine. Mr. Rae indicated that everything had to be done in co-operation with NATO members, and I completely understand that. However, a number of NATO members have made much more significant contributions when it comes to lethal weapons.

Why does Canada not want to join them, at least not yet?

[*English*]

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Mr. Chair, I will turn to Heidi Hulan to speak to that question.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I think we talked about this the last time the committee met with officials from Global Affairs Canada on this subject, and I just want to reiterate what we discussed at that time, which was that we respond to what is happening in the country in many, many ways, because there are many, many needs. Some of those needs are lethal. The Ukrainians have asked for certain forms of lethal assistance, and we have provided some lethal assistance, but they have also asked for things like body armour, military medical support and those sorts of things, and that's what our announcement this weekend focused on. We envisaged the \$25 million being spent on body armour, helmets, gear, gas masks, the kinds of things that are really needed in an acute conventional conflict, which is what this is.

I think I'll leave my answer there. I'd be happy to take more questions on this. Thanks.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Ms. Hulan, thank you for clarifying that.

It's clear that the Baltic states and Finland, the target of thinly veiled threats from Russia, are concerned.

In your assessment, are those concerns justified?

[English]

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I think it's fair to say that Russian behaviour right now is, generally speaking, extremely provocative and destabilizing, whether it's in relation to the nuclear issues that you have raised here at committee today, or in relation to opposition figures in country, or in relation to Ukraine's right to exist as a country.

I don't know precisely which comments you're referring to in relation to Finland, but I will just say that we take all aggressive behaviour and words extremely seriously indeed and we work with our partners on that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Hulan.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

[English]

Mr. Davies, go ahead for two and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I have a question, Mr. Chair.

Don't we get six minutes in this round?

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, when we have just one panel, for the second, third and fourth rounds, members are given the prescribed time for questioning, in other words two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Rest assured, Mr. Chair, I'm writing that down.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Davies, go ahead for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you.

It's been noted by some keen observers that there is a complete absence of women at the talks in Belarus today, which leads me to focus my next question on women.

Can officials from GAC inform the committee how we are supporting women in Ukraine, including the women's organizations that have been funded by Canada to date?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: I'll start, and then I'll pass it on to my colleague Heidi Hulan, who is responsible for our peace and stabilization operations program.

Since 2014, we have been working really diligently on supporting women through our development programs. There has been a keen focus on developing women's capacity to play a political role and an economic role in Ukraine, with support in rural areas, so I would say we are also disappointed but perhaps not entirely surprised to see that there are no women present.

I'll turn it over to Heidi, who can talk about some of the work we're doing with destabilization. I would note as well that back in

December we had our ambassador for women, peace and security over there to push on exactly this issue.

Heidi, I'll turn it over to you.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Support to women and women's organizations is integral to what we are doing in Ukraine and what we have been doing in Ukraine in recent years. It's particularly important in the context of our military training mission, for which there's been a real focus on gender and women in the armed forces. We've also invested in this domain in relation to programming on judicial reform in Ukraine, including appointments, and we support very actively the promotion of women to serve at the very highest levels of the Ukrainian system across the board.

I'll just close by saying that it's a real disappointment that there are no women at the border, but certainly, at the end of this conflict, women will have to be involved in every aspect of implementing what comes next.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you.

I'll try to squeeze in one more question.

Ms. Sunday, you commented, in reference to refugees, "People are getting out." There was a fairly disturbing article in The Globe and Mail yesterday titled "Africans and Asians...subjected to racial discrimination by border guards".

I know that eastern European countries have had some trouble with xenophobia and racism. I'm just wondering if Canada is expressing itself in terms of making sure that there are no discriminatory measures being taken against people of colour in terms of any policy in the theatre that's being operated right now.

• (1235)

The Chair: Give a brief answer, please.

Ms. Julie Sunday: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

We're working very closely with all of our like-minded countries, particularly the Five Eyes, to ensure that movement across that border is seamless for everyone who is entitled to leave. Certainly, we'll continue to do that to support exit for those wishing to depart.

Again, our overall assessment is that the borders are moving. There are very long lineups on the Ukrainian side, and we have been in discussions with Ukrainian border officials to look at ways that this can be expedited or that we can better support exit of individuals from Ukraine who are wishing to leave.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Sunday.

Thank you, Mr. Davies.

We have Mr. Chong, please, for five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to explore the whole issue of what the government's position is on the provision of lethal weapons to Ukraine and to clarify whether or not the February 14 announcement was an exception to the rule or whether the policy has changed.

Up to Monday, February 14, the day that the emergency powers were invoked, the Government of Canada's position was not to ship lethal weapons to Ukraine because, in the words of the Prime Minister, the solution was "diplomatic", not military. On February 14, the government announced it would be shipping lethal weapons to Ukraine.

I want to clarify this important issue: whether or not the government is prepared to ship lethal weapons to Ukraine going forward, or whether that February 14 announcement was an exception to the previously stated policy.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Mr. Chair, I'll begin with that, and then I'll turn to my colleague from National Defence to speak more fully on this.

What I would say is that the situation on the ground has evolved—and evolved quickly. I think when we last spoke to this committee we weren't even certain that a full invasion was really in the cards. As events have evolved on the ground, we and the rest of the world have evolved with that to understand how we can best support Ukraine and how we can do that in consultation with our allies to make sure that it has real impact. I think that fundamentally, as the needs evolve, we have been there at every stage to support Ukraine.

I will turn it over to my colleague from National Defence to perhaps speak specifically to that lethal weapons question, but I think that clearly the government has provided lethal weapons and has offered that real support to Ukraine and, as Ms. Hulan just said, is going through the full range of things that Ukraine has asked us to assist with.

General Prévost?

MGen Paul Prévost: Sure, I can jump in here.

First, I'll say that sending weapons to a country is not something simple, and it starts with what we have to offer. When we sent the last package, it was what we had to offer, what was on the shelf here. It's difficult to send.... There are many complexities here, but first of all, it's what's available. We did this, and I think we have to view this as a complementary effort. All allies provide what they can. There's an issue of interoperability. Is what we're going to provide here available for Ukrainians? Are they trained on it? If not, why send it? There are many nations at this time providing weapons that Ukrainians are familiar with.

I'll come back to what I've said since the beginning. What Canada has provided to Ukrainians over the years is training. That's what we're known for—providing good training—and we've been there all along, onside with them, for seven years.

Thank you.

Hon. Michael Chong: It's somewhat of a surprise that a comment was just made that when the department last appeared in front of the committee on February 3, the Canadian government wasn't sure if a full invasion was imminent. President Biden and the

American intelligence community have been saying for months now that an invasion was going to take place, that all scenarios were anticipated. I'm somewhat surprised that the department wasn't sure whether a full invasion was imminent on February 3, only several weeks ago. That's one comment that I have.

This is for the Department of National Defence.

I'm wondering if there are any discussions going on between the department and the Pentagon about the new military co-operation taking place between the American administration and Scandinavian countries, such as those countries allowing U.S. military aircraft to be staged from their airbases, such as joint training missions involving U.S. bombers and Scandinavian military fighter jets. I wonder if Canada is involved with any of those discussions, because they relate to our Arctic's security and sovereignty as well.

• (1240)

MGen Paul Prévost: I'm not aware of any specific discussions on that.

I can say that we're in constant communication with NATO and NATO allies on all of those issues, on how we're going to continue to bolster the security in Europe, the eastern flank in Europe. I'm not aware if we're part of discussions with the U.S. and Scandinavia on any specific basing.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you for your testimony.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Major-General Prévost.

Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Mr. Sarai, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

On February 27, just yesterday, the Minister of Transport, Omar Alghabra, announced that Canada has closed its airspace to Russian aircraft operators effective immediately. This was done in conjunction with other allies who have implemented the same measures. What impact will this have?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Mr. Chair, as with other measures—different sorts of sanctions we've put in place—the impact of this will be both in its symbolism and its substance.

In its symbolism, I think there is no more clear expression to Russia of its isolation on the world stage than the fact that its aircraft are physically unable to travel over a wide range of countries. This is, in particular, a shocking development for those close to Putin, those enriched under his regime. For those who have used these flights to maintain an international lifestyle, this will bite.

The other aspect that will be important is that it has an economic bite on Russia. As Russia is unable to fly its aircraft, as it imposes—as it has with the U.K., for example—reciprocal measures which don't permit overflights of Russia, this will be a loss of significant revenue to Russia from those overflights.

The fact that Canada and other countries have put in place this ban certainly is a clear message to Russia that its actions are unacceptable and that it is becoming a pariah. On the other hand, it will bite directly into the economy in terms of their ability to generate revenue from their aircraft.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Are there reciprocal effects from this? Has Russia banned Canadian flights? Out of precaution, are Canadian flights, for example the Air Canada flight that goes from Delhi over Russian airspace to Toronto and Vancouver, using alternative routes?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: As of the time that I came to this committee, I was not aware of any reciprocal retaliation against Canada. Russia did announce it against the U.K. specifically. It would not be surprising if there were a similar retaliation.

I would say as well that Transport Canada has put in a notice to airmen for Ukraine. It is not my understanding, but we can clarify later, that one is in place for Russia at this point.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

Our Canadian office at the UN High Commission for Refugees told Radio-Canada that, according to estimates, more than 50,000 Ukrainians fled the country in the first 48 hours. What contingency planning, in terms of humanitarian assistance, has been done by the EU and its partners to prepare for the potential mass displacement of people within and beyond Ukraine borders?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: The vast majority of those fleeing Ukraine are going into Poland, but some are going into such other neighbouring countries as Romania. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was in touch with these countries in advance of the invasion, certainly specifically about Canadians who could arrive in these territories but also engaging these countries on what their needs would be. She is flying to Poland tomorrow to see for herself the situation on the ground and to engage with Polish authorities.

Certainly the European Union, given that Poland is a European Union country, will be a key lead on this, but they will do so with the support of the UN and with UN member countries, such as Canada.

• (1245)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Has the EU prepared to accommodate the thousands, potentially even millions, fleeing? Have they made contingency plans with regard to that? Is Canada able to help in any way?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Through our embassy in Warsaw, we have been in regular discussion with the Polish authorities about their needs. We have people on the ground at one of the major crossing points in Poland to assess the situation.

Certainly until now Poland has been able to respond sufficiently. I think that has been partly through government and partly through the images of the real generosity of Poles in helping those coming

over the borders, but this is a situation that is evolving. Needs will shift. Numbers are increasing. The important thing is that we will continue to be in touch with Poland and work with the European Union, which will be responsible in the first instance for backing this up. We're really live to the fact that women and children are coming over the border and need to be properly received.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Sarai and Ms. McCardell.

I will give the floor to Mr. Morantz for five minutes, after which, as members agreed, we will discuss a motion that was put forward.

Mr. Morantz, the floor goes to you.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are widespread reports in Canadian media that some of Mr. Putin's top oligarchs have billions of dollars in Canada in Canadian assets. It would seem logical that if we wanted our sanctions to have an impact, we should be freezing those assets that are actually in our country.

Russian anti-corruption activists like Alexei Navalny have specifically identified and asked Canada to sanction these oligarchs. Why haven't we done that?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: We have sanctioned a number of the oligarchs closest to Mr. Putin. Even before this invasion, a significant number were sanctioned by us. In recent days we've sanctioned some of their family members to really increase the pressure around them—

Mr. Marty Morantz: I hate to interrupt you, but I have limited time here. My question is focused on the issue of the freezing of Canadian assets. Could you address that?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Sure. Absolutely.

We're in direct touch with Finance right now. We're working with Treasury in the U.S. and, as I mentioned earlier, with the EU and the U.K. through this trans-Atlantic task force to track down where these assets are. You've seen some of the measures against banks today. We'll be following up to look very closely at where these assets are. As you are well aware, not all are clearly identified. For these individuals, there will need to be some research done.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Okay.

Our party has called for the expulsion of the Russian ambassador. Are you able to comment on that at all? I realize that the government hasn't made any announcements yet, but do you think that is likely?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: As the situation evolves, I think we've seen the measures that we've put in place evolve with it. I would add, though, a cautionary note about cutting off the opportunity for that kind of high-level contact, whether it's with the Russian ambassador here or through our ambassador in Moscow. As you'll have seen earlier, Minister Joly brought in the ambassador to give him a dressing-down for Russia's actions. This kind of communication is important to signal directly to the regime our views on what's taking place.

As well, we can see that our ambassador in Moscow also plays a role in protecting Canada's interests, whether it's consular or just as she did over this past weekend, setting a real example in Moscow by joining like-minded ambassadors on the anniversary of the death of Boris Nemtsov.

I think the bottom line is that at this point we are looking very clearly at all options to respond to Russia. Ambassadors play an important role in the diplomacy we've been talking about for weeks, which in the end will play a role in ending this conflict. It's not a decision to be taken lightly.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Okay. I appreciate that it's on the table still.

The ambassador used the words “deeply irrational”, and I just keep thinking about them. It leaves everything on the table. For example, is it possible that Mr. Putin might seek to threaten other European countries beyond Ukraine if he were to be successful in this crazy endeavour that he has embarked on? Does this threaten the broader security of Europe militarily?

• (1250)

Ms. Sandra McCardell: I think from the beginning of this engagement, certainly President Putin has discussed this in terms of the security not only of Ukraine but also of Europe. Over the course of these past weeks we have seen Russia's neighbour countries ask for and receive enhanced presence from NATO countries.

There is a lot of anxiety over what President Putin could do. I think we need to stay in touch, be ready to respond and be ready to support with our allies. The rest would be speculation at this point.

Mr. Marty Morantz: My last question, and what I want to find out, is basically whether our sanctioning legislation has any mechanism that holds Global Affairs to account for the decisions it makes. Is information about this process published anywhere? Is there any reporting on how these sanctions are tracked and whether they are being enforced at all by the government?

If there isn't enough time, you can respond in writing as well.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: In terms of the sanctions, there is reporting on those. Certainly, I think committees such as yours do a good job of holding us to account as you are doing today. I would be happy to provide further details in a written response.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Morantz.

Thank you very much, Ms. McCardell.

Colleagues, if you agree, we will ask our witnesses to stand by for the rest of the meeting just in case there are any questions with

respect to the discussion we're now going to embark on. We do sometimes ask witnesses if they wish to connect. I think in this case it's directly related to what the witnesses have expertise on.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Chong to present his motion.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I gave notice of the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development report to the House of Commons that it condemns:

- a. the unwarranted and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, a clear violation of international law;
- b. the previous invasion of the Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2014 and the illegal annexation of Crimea into the Russian Federation; and
- c. the Russian Federation and President Putin for these violations of international law and attacks on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

[*English*]

That's my motion. I understand there is an amendment to the motion, which, in the interest of speaking as a committee with one voice, we welcome.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Chong.

The motion is on the floor. I now invite colleagues to raise their hands to signal their desire to enter debate.

Madame Bendant, you have the floor. Please go ahead.

Ms. Rachel Bendant: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Chong, for having circulated that. I'm pleased to be able to address it this afternoon.

Further to discussion with my colleagues on this side, we would like to propose a number of amendments.

Mr. Chair, I look to you for the best way to do this. We have copies of these, which I'm happy to provide to the clerk and to colleagues, if they are interested. I will read into the record the entirety of our amendments, with your permission:

That, given the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development report to the House of Commons that it:

- a) Condemns this unjustified and unprovoked attack, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, as a clear violation of international law, the UN Charter, and the rights of Ukraine to sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and democracy;
- b) Condemns the illegal recognition by the Russian Federation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as so-called “independent states”, and the 2014 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and its illegal annexation of Crimea;
- c) Calls upon the Russian Federation to immediately end the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools;
- d) Calls upon the Government of Canada, and all parties in the House of Commons, to support:

1. The continued imposition of severe economic penalties, including sanctions, targeting President Putin's inner circle, including Russian oligarchs, and those who have supported this egregious violation of international law; and

2. The provision of support to the Government of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the provision of humanitarian aid to the people of Ukraine; and

3. The issuing of an order of general application directing the CRTC to a new broadcasting policy which would remove the state-controlled broadcasters that spread disinformation and propaganda from the CRTC's list of non-Canadian programming services and stations authorized for distribution, effectively removing Russia Today (RT) from Canadian airwaves; and

4. The removal of Russia from the SWIFT payment system, a critical part of the global financial system, an action which must be pursued in collaboration with international partners.

e) Stands unwavering and united in our solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

That is the motion we would suggest moves forward, hopefully on a unanimous basis on behalf of this committee, Mr. Chair.

● (1255)

The Chair: Madame Bendayan, thank you very much.

There is an amendment to Mr. Chong's motion on the floor, which has been read in detail. I now invite debate on the amendment.

I see that Mr. Aboultaif has his hand raised virtually. Colleagues in the room, if you wish to intervene, please signal to get my attention as well, and we will compose a unified hybrid list of intervenors.

Mr. Aboultaif, please go ahead.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Chair, thank you for giving me the time.

Is this just an amendment, or is it a proposal for another motion by the government? I'd like that to be clarified.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Mr. Aboultaif. It's important to clarify that procedurally. Effectively, it is an amendment to Mr. Chong's motion that has been proposed by Madame Bendayan.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say that I wholly agree with every single word in the original motion and the proposed amendment.

Obviously, the member can count on my support.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

Do other colleagues wish to intervene on the amendment?

Mr. Morantz, please go ahead.

Mr. Marty Morantz: I just want to add my voice. I completely support the original motion as amended and I look forward to voting in support of it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Morantz.

Is there any other debate? Are there any other interventions that colleagues wish to make, virtually or in person?

Mr. Davies, please go ahead.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you. I would like to add the support of the New Democratic Party to this motion, as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Davies.

Mr. Oliphant, please go ahead.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I would just like to commend all the members of the committee for being able to work on this so well. These issues are well beyond any partisan differences, and I think the original motion was excellent and the amendments are good. I particularly thank Mr. Chong for his improving the amendments.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Chong.

Let's go through this procedurally, colleagues. We have a few minutes left to do this, but I sense that there is unanimity.

Is there any opposition to the amendment that has been introduced by Madame Bendayan?

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That takes us back to the main motion brought forward by Mr. Chong, as amended by Madame Bendayan. Is there any other discussion on the motion as amended?

Go ahead, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: I move that we have a recorded division on this.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

A recorded vote has been requested.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The motion as amended passes unanimously. Congratulations, colleagues.

Thank you, Mr. Chong, for bringing the motion.

That takes us to the end of our scheduled session, but I would be remiss if I did not thank our officials for being with us today, for their tireless service and for their expertise during these very challenging and distressing times.

Once again, in his absence, thanks to Ambassador Rae for joining us for the first portion of the meeting.

Of course, to our House of Commons team, our clerk and all of our interpreters and support staff who are keeping our committee on its feet, thank you.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Thank you, honourable members.

[*English*]

With that, we stand adjourned until our next meeting.

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