



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-00419**

BY: **MR. BEZAN (SELKIRK—INTERLAKE—EASTMAN)**

DATE: **JUNE 6, 2016**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **THE HONOURABLE JOHN MCCALLUM**

Response by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Issuance of visas

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The requirement that foreign nationals first obtain a Temporary Resident Visa to visit Canada is the norm, not the exception. Ukraine is among the large majority of countries whose nationals require a visitor visa in order to travel to Canada for business, tourist or family purposes. Visa requirements protect the health, safety and security of Canadians by screening out those who are inadmissible under Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. They also help to uphold public confidence in Canada's immigration system, which is often held up as a model internationally.

Canada's visa policy decisions are evidence based and not linked to political or trade agreements. Decisions to lift or impose visa requirements are premised on rigorous country-by-country assessments. With the aim of striking a balance between welcoming visitors and keeping Canadians secure, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) works with its federal partners to assess a number of objective criteria:

- a country's migration trends, such as visa refusal rates and asylum claims;
- security risks;
- border management practices;
- the integrity of travel documents;
- human rights conditions; and,
- bilateral relations.

IRCC conducts continuous monitoring of all countries to determine whether a change to any country's visa status may be warranted. If preliminary results are positive, the Department can launch an intensive, formal review. Given the importance of Canada's relationship with Ukraine, officials have been closely monitoring migration trends and country conditions in Ukraine. At this time, Ukraine falls short of the thresholds Canada uses to gauge suitability for a visa exemption. As a result, the Department has no plans to formally review Ukraine's visa requirement in the near term.

While the visa requirement will remain in place for the time being, Canada offers a high calibre of visa services to Ukrainian nationals. Visa Application Centres in Kiev and Lviv assist clients in their mother tongue to submit complete applications, and Ukrainians are automatically considered for 10-year Multiple-Entry Visas. This allows visitors to come and go from Canada for six months at a time, without having to re-apply each time. At just five days (80% of cases), processing times for Ukrainian visitor visa applications were faster than the global average in 2015. With this level of visa service, the Department expects that Ukrainian travellers will be able to reap the full benefits of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement.

While IRCC is committed to working with Ukraine on migration matters, it is incumbent upon Ukraine to meet Canada's established criteria for a visa exemption. In the meantime, the Department pledges to do everything possible to further enhance service delivery for the thousands of Ukrainians who visit and do business in Canada every year.