At this year’s Annual General Meeting, Gerard van Herk moved that the CLA endorse the Guidelines for the Use of Language Analysis in Relation to Questions of National Origin in Refugee Cases. A vote on the motion was delayed in order to allow all members to read the guidelines and background documentation.

At the AGM, discussion focussed on his sketch of the historical background of the Guidelines, which may have resulted in the perception that this is a battle between language-related subdisciplines. The attached motion makes it clear that what we would endorse is “evidence of professional training and expertise in the scientific study of language.”

The current motion includes a link to the full guidelines, and the many “whereas” clauses detail the rationale behind the endorsement (and the guidelines themselves):

**Guidelines for the Use of Language Analysis in Relation to Questions of National Origin in Refugee Cases**


Whereas the Canadian Linguistic Association recognizes that the links between a person's language competence and their social background and national origin are potentially complex; and

Whereas a number of governments around the world use language as one criterion in determining an individual's eligibility for refugee status; and

Whereas refugees are defined by the United Nations 1951 Convention, and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (to which Canada is a party), as persons subject to a well-founded fear of persecution, and are recognized as being entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms; and

Whereas qualified linguists have participated in such asylum proceedings, and

Whereas the Canadian Linguistic Association affirms that high standards of professional training and expertise in the scientific study of language should be brought to bear when language issues are at stake in serious legal proceedings; and

Whereas Guidelines for the Use of Language Analysis in Relation to Questions of National Origin in Refugee Cases were developed and published in June 2004 by the National Language and Origin Group to address this issue; and

Whereas the Guidelines, in brief, advise that considerable caution be taken in applying language analysis to matters of national origin, national identity or citizenship, and that analysts in such proceedings give evidence of professional training and expertise in the scientific study of language; and

Whereas endorsement of these Guidelines by appropriate professional associations may greatly assist governments and others in deciding whether and to what degree language analysis is reliable in particular cases;

Therefore be it resolved that the Canadian Linguistic Association endorse these Guidelines, and recommend them to its members and the general public.