



April 4, 2013

Hon. Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Minister,

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is a national organization of members inspired by faith to work for justice in public policy in Canada. We encourage citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice and stewardship. Our organization has long been active in making Canada a place of welcome and of refuge, especially through our campaign entitled *Welcome the Stranger: Becoming Neighbours*. We write today to share our increasing concern about recent changes announced by your Ministry in regard to Canada's treatment of refugees.

Mr. Kenney, among our various concerns the federal government's decision to withdraw medical coverage to certain groups of refugees remains paramount. We add our voice to those many faith communities, over twenty medical associations, various sponsorship agreement holders, refugee service associations and organizations of lawyers who have expressed their opposition to these cuts to medical services for some refugees that were previously paid for under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP).

We note that many refugee-serving groups and even some sponsorship agreement holders have communicated their disappointment to you that there was little notice and no consultation when this measure was announced. We note that, as a result, one refugee reception organization has taken the issue to federal court, arguing that there has been a breach of contract with them.

CPJ does not believe that savings will be found as a result of denial of these necessary health services. Rather, costs will be downloaded to provinces, individuals, charities or sponsors. And if persons needing care cannot access that care when most opportune, health care costs will even rise as expensive

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hospital care and emergency rooms become the last resort. Great confusion now reigns in the administration of your announced changes, as reported by health practitioners across the land, in terms of the classes of refugees covered and the services now provided.

Beyond increased suffering for refugees, this measure has also created a threatening situation for sponsorship agreement holders, including faith communities. Many faith communities see refugee reception and settlement as essential parts of their ministry. However, your IFHP cuts expose these communities to potentially catastrophic costs in fulfillment of this ministry. This can only result in a decrease in the ability of faith communities, and other sponsoring groups, to carry out their mission.

Mr. Kenney, CPJ believes that health care should be provided to residents of Canada based on need, rather than confused bureaucratic categories and ability to pay. We also believe that the federal government should work with faith communities and other sponsorship agreement holders in the preparation and implementation of policies that affect civil society's ability to join government in welcoming the stranger.

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, celebrated across our land as Refugee Rights Day, we respectfully request that you reinstate full health coverage for refugee claimants as a sign of how our government leaders are, with us, Proud to Protect Refugees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Huyser-Wierenga". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Huyser-Wierenga  
Chair of the Board

cc: Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims, MP, NDP critic for Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism  
Mr. Kevin Lamoureux, MP, Liberal critic for Citizenship and Immigration  
M. André Bellavance, MP, Bloc Québécois critic for Citizenship and Immigration  
Mr. Don Galloway, Green Party critic for Immigration and Citizenship