

CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE

June 20, 2013

The Honourable Jason Kenney, PC, MP
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Minister,

Thank you for prompt reply (on April 30th) to our letter from April 4, 2013. We appreciate your taking the time to address our concerns regarding changes to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP).

The information you provided on the history of the IFHP, as well as your current approach to the program, was beneficial to us in our analysis of the issue. We believe there are core values and priorities for the IFHP which we can agree on. However, we still have three outstanding concerns with this policy change upon which we seek further clarification.

First, we agree that equity and fairness should be essential objectives in our health care policies. You mentioned repeatedly that the recent changes to the IFHP return coverage for refugees back to levels equal to that of the majority of Canadians. However, the vast majority of Canadians receive supplemental health care coverage from either their employer or social assistance. Therefore, restoring the IFHP to previous levels would ensure refugees have the same level of coverage as these Canadians, thereby achieving greater equity.

Second, it is clear that efficient use of hard-earned taxpayer dollars should be a priority for your government. Yet, our concern is that rather than providing a cost savings, the changes to the IFHP have simply shifted the costs to other groups such as provincial governments, hospitals, and sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs). In fact, if we look at our healthcare system as a whole (as opposed to simply costs to the federal government) increased coverage for preventative care would decrease costs in the long-term, because we would avoid expensive emergency room visits down the road.

The CJL Foundation
operating as CPJ.

Charitable registration
89438 3512 RR0001

309 Cooper Street
Suite 501
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 0G5

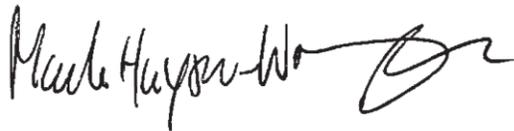
T 613-232-0275
F 613-232-1275
cpj@cpj.ca
www.cpj.ca

Your letter refers to “sensible” changes you have made to the IFHP, but perhaps you can understand that these changes are much less than sensible for refugees and claimants who desperately need health coverage. Nor are the changes you’ve announced “sensible” for Sponsorship Agreement Holders such as many religious communities - which are now exposed to additional and potentially damaging financial liability.

Third, we agree that the intent of the IFHP should be to provide care and protection for both Canadian citizens and refugees alike. However, by limiting coverage to only some refugee claimants who then only receive coverage for health issues that pose a threat to public health and safety, such as infectious diseases, we do not see how this test is met.

June 20th is celebrated internationally as World Refugee Day. It is a day to recognize the incredible hardships refugees around the world endure as they seek new homes of safety and peace. We hope you will take this opportunity to show your support for refugees here in Canada and respectfully request that you reinstate IFHP coverage for refugee claimants.

Yours 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
Citizens for Public Justice

PS Your April 30 2013 letter to us included information in response to a Dr. Beaton. This may have been a reference to some other person who wrote to you – it certainly does not pertain to our correspondence with you.