September 1, 2018

The Honourable Bill Blair, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Blair,

The Safe Third Country Agreement is an unjust policy for refugees seeking protection in Canada. All refugees have a right to receive due process, and the STCA denies refugees arriving from the United States this basic right.

With the current U.S. Administration’s harsh stance against refugees and immigrants, the U.S. is not a safe place for many refugees. When refugees are returned to the U.S., they are at a high risk of being detained and returned to countries where they may be subject to harm or persecution upon arrival.

As someone living on Indigenous lands, in a country made up of immigrants, I am happy to welcome refugees. I am proud of Canada’s rich tradition of providing protection for many of the world’s displaced and marginalized people. I am saddened to think that while we readily receive resettled refugees from abroad, in contrast, we often reject those who arrive at our border.

I am concerned that in the process of coming to Canada, many refugees embark on dangerous journeys. Some refugees have risked life and limb while crossing the border during the winter months. Many others have turned to smuggling networks that put them in harm’s way. Much of this could be avoided with proactive policies that put the dignity and safety of refugee claimants first.

It is with all this in mind that I ask the government to live up to Canada's international obligations for refugee protection and:

1. Refuse to mischaracterize refugee claims as "illegal" border crossers.
2. Restore access to refugee protection at the Canada-U.S. border.
3. Rescind the Safe Third Country Agreement with the U.S.

Canada should pursue a robust alternative to the STCA that promotes and protects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of refugees, restores security at the Canada-U.S. border, employs up-to-date technologies for the sake of timely processing of refugee claims, and removes any incentives for irregular border crossing and associated harms.

Thank you for your commitment to creating a more just and inclusive Canada. Now, would you stand with refugees and rescind the STCA? I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Name Name 321 Justice St.

Ottawa, ON K1S 5B7

cc: other MPs, ministers, and organizations who also received the letter.

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