



10 February 2017

The Honourable Ahmed D. Hussen, MP  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
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The Honourable Minister Hussen,

There are millions of refugees around the world today. Each displaced person has a story of pain, hardship and sadness; and multiplying this suffering by millions is a tragedy and a crisis.

Recently, Canada has seen an increase in the number of refugees entering Canada from the United States via irregular and life-threatening border crossings in order to have their claim heard. We are concerned that, due to the Canada – US Safe Third Country Agreement, refugees are being prevented from applying for and receiving asylum in Canada.

The Canadian Council of Churches, our member denominations, and their members have a long history and a robust living tradition of welcoming refugees to Canada and advocating for the rights of refugees in Canada. In recent years churches in Canada have privately sponsored thousands of families, and many stand ready and are prepared to welcome more. A decade ago The Canadian Council of Churches with the Canadian Council of Refugees and Amnesty International Canada successfully challenged in Federal Court the Safe Third Country Agreement but regretted the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada not to grant leave in the case challenging the Canada – U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement in 2009.

Together, through our member denominations we represent more than 85% of Christians in Canada. We were founded in 1944.

Today I am writing to ask three questions:

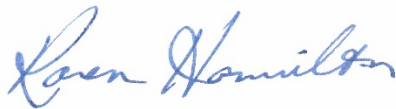
1. The large number of refugees around the globe means there is an urgent need for safe places to live. When will the Government of Canada lift the cap, increase Canada's

refugee resettlement targets, and open the door to more refugee sponsorship applications? In addition, many sponsorship agreement holders have been waiting many months for opportunities to sponsor refugees. How are you working to expedite the process of sponsoring refugees?

2. We are concerned that some policies are hindering refugees from applying for and receiving asylum in Canada. When and how will you assess the Canada – US Safe Third Country Agreement and assure Canadians that the lives of refugees are not being endangered, and that all parties are meeting their obligations under international law?
3. Many new refugee claimants are facing extraordinary difficulties in finding shelter due to the lack of affordable housing in cities in Canada. How will the Government of Canada respond to ensure that refugee claimants are safe and receive the supports they need to make their claims?

I look forward to your response to these questions. The Canadian Council of Churches is committed to advancing the imperatives of our faith, including to welcome the stranger and to offer generous hospitality to all those who need it.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton  
General Secretary

Cc:

- Hon. Michelle Rempel, MP, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Critic, Conservative Party of Canada
- Jenny Kwan, MP, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
- Mario Beaulieu, MP, Citizenship and Immigration Critic, Bloc Québécois
- Elizabeth May, MP, Leader, Green Party of Canada

*The Canadian Council of Churches is the broadest ecumenical body in Canada, now representing 25 denominations of Anglican, Evangelical, Free Church, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic traditions. Together we represent more than 85% of the Christians in Canada. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.*