

April 15, 2019

Honourable Bill Blair  
Minister of Border Security  
[Bill.Blair@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Bill.Blair@parl.gc.ca)

Honourable Ahmed Hussen  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
[Ahmed.Hussen@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Ahmed.Hussen@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Ministers:

The Commission on Justice and Peace (CJP) of the Canadian Council of Churches expresses its concern that changes to the refugee determination system have been included in the Budget Implementation Bill (Bill C-97).

Of primary concern to the CJP is that all persons in Canada claiming refugee status experience a just, fair and respectful determination process in Canada. Members of the Canadian Council of Churches have been involved in sponsoring refugees and advocating for policies that respect their human rights for more than thirty years. Provisions being introduced through the budget implementation bill will have a significant impact on the ability of refugee claimants to gain access to a fair hearing before an independent tribunal. The bill introduces “a new ground of ineligibility for refugee protection if a claimant has previously made a claim for refugee protection in another country.” We are concerned, therefore, that this new ground raises questions of how rights will be respected and due process ensured.

We would like to reiterate our longstanding conviction that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to in-Canada refugee claimants and includes the requirement that they be treated in conformity with the principles of fundamental justice.

In addition to this concern, we note that these substantive changes are included in an “omnibus” budget implementation bill. Major changes to the refugee determination system, which affect the life chances of the people involved, should be subject to careful consideration by all stakeholders and public debate in parliament as a separate bill.

We urge you to remove these provisions from Bill C-97.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to share our concerns. Please be in touch directly with Jonathan Schmidt ([schmidt@councilofchurches.ca](mailto:schmidt@councilofchurches.ca)), Associate Secretary, Justice and Peace to respond and schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Donna Geernaert SC".

Donna Geernaert, SC

Chair of the Commission on Justice and Peace of The Canadian Council of Churches

cc:

Michelle Rempel, Conservative Party of Canada,

Vice-Chair Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Jenny Kwan, New Democratic Party,

Vice-Chair Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Elizabeth May, Green Party of Canada

Mario Beaulieu, Bloc Québécois