

January 20, 2014

The Honourable Chris Alexander
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Hon. Minister:

Re: Strengthening Family Class Reunification

On behalf of a coalition of community based organizations and academics across Canada, we are writing to seek your help to renew Canada's commitment to strengthening the family class immigration program.

We are also writing to commend you on your decision to keep the age of dependent children for the purpose of all immigration applications to under 22, notwithstanding the proposed regulatory changes introduced by your predecessor.

Family class immigrants of all ages and backgrounds contribute significantly to the economic, social and cultural advancement of Canada. They form the backbones of our communities and their presence allows their families to flourish. Canada as a whole is better off because of the sacrifices all of our parents and grandparents make to keep our family strong.

Yet the changes to family class immigration which took effect on January 1, 2014 vis-à-vis the sponsorship of parents and grandparents are making it much more difficult for Canadians to be reunited with their loved ones. These changes are premised upon the unproven and inaccurate assumption that parents and grandparents are a "drain" on the social support systems, while ignoring the immeasurable contributions – both monetary and otherwise - they make to Canadian society.

Moreover, these changes have a disproportionate negative impact on women, refugees, and other marginalized communities who are now facing greater challenges in meeting the hardened financial eligibility for sponsors.

Even without these changes, the Federal Government's retreat from the family class program over the last decade has already taken a toll on many Canadian families. Those who are lucky have to wait for a minimum of 7 years just to be reunited with their loved ones; those who are not may never see their families ever again, thanks to the tough new rules and the restrictive quota for family class applications.

As Canadians in many provinces are getting ready to celebrate Family Day, we ask you to help us mark this important moment by making a commitment to strengthen the family class program through such measures as increasing the number of family class

immigrants intake each year, lowering if not eliminating the income requirement for sponsorship, and broadening the definition of family members.

To discuss these and other needed reform to bring family values back into Canada's immigration system, we ask for a meeting with you in person.

We look forward to receiving your favourable reply.

Sincerely,

Canadian Arab Federation
Canadian Council for Refugees
Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Ontario Chapter
Colour of Poverty/Colour of Change
FCJ Refugee Centre
Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
Migrante Canada
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
YWCA Canada