

October 6, 2014

Hon. Chris Alexander, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

Dear Minister Alexander,

On behalf of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and its 30,000 members across the country, we stand with the Canadian Medical Association and urge you to reconsider the federal government's appeal of the ruling of the Federal Court released on July 4, 2014 (*Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care v AG Canada*; 2014 FC 651).

Since the cuts to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) were first announced in 2012, the CFPC has advocated for full access to quality care for all people in Canada, including our most vulnerable populations. These concerns have been shared with other national health organizations. We continue to hope you will work with us to ensure that some of the most marginalized populations in our country are not harmed. As a recognized leader in health care, Canada has generated research that shows that even simple health care interventions have substantial benefits for newcomers.

It is clear from the Federal Court's ruling that reducing health care for refugees poses no clear benefits, and in many respects is worse for all Canadians. First, it will be more expensive and costs are unequally distributed as they are downloaded to provincial and community health care services; second, reduced care coverage would generate higher costs from increased use of emergency departments; third, the risk of undiagnosed and untreated health issues would result in greater medical requirements and increased health care costs; fourth, not addressing health issues such as vision and dental care would make it more difficult for newcomers to acquire language and job skills; fifth, the changes to the IFHP were found by the court to have a disproportionate negative impact on the children of refugees. For these reasons, the cuts to the IFHP would have a negative impact on the economy, public health, and safety for all Canadians.

The CFPC commended the Federal Court for its July 4th decision regarding refugee health care. It provided a clear and positive direction for the IFHP. We urge you to not appeal the Federal Court ruling. It reflects Canada's compassion and humanitarianism, and the high standards of health care that we are so fortunate to have in our country.

The CFPC continues to welcome the opportunity to work with the Government of Canada on the required legislation changes that will help ensure the highest quality health care for all the people of Canada.

Yours sincerely,



Kathy Lawrence, MD, CCFP, FCFP
President, The College of Family Physicians of Canada