



June 20, 2018

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Hussen,

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) share a profound concern with the most recent violations of international refugee and human rights obligations being implemented by Executive Orders in the United States.

As professions deeply connected to supporting and protecting children, we are appalled at the ‘zero tolerance’ policy currently being applied in the United States that separates and detains children and parents; intentionally causing psychological harm and crisis for children already in distress.

This unconscionable forced family separation policy, combined with existing Executive Orders to halt travel from seven Muslim-majority countries to the United States, has created a retributive environment that violates basic human dignity.

Consequently, the CASW and CPA jointly call for the Government of Canada to demonstrate compassion and international leadership in protecting the rights of children and those seeking asylum by immediately suspending the *Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA)* with the United States. Further, CASW and CPA call for the immediate revising of the Canada Border Services Agencies own policies on family separation to place the interests of children first.

The STCA stipulates that Canada acknowledges the United States as a ‘safe haven’ for refugees. Given that their current policies violate international human rights obligations, the claim of a safe haven can no longer be justifiably upheld.

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The suspension of the STCA will demonstrate leadership and solidarity with refugees and those seeking asylum around the world that Canada upholds international human rights.

CASW and CPA acknowledge the restricted capacity of Canada to accommodate large numbers of asylum seekers and that these numbers might increase with a suspension of the STCA. However, a failure to act will perpetuate the dire consequences on those seeking asylum. In concert with suspending the STCA, Canada must commit support and resources for asylum seekers so that their path to joining Canadian society affords them, and Canada, the best possible chances of success. .

Consequently, if there is no significant change to the policies of the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, changes which include an end to the separation of families detained at the United States border, CASW and CPA call for the suspension of the STCA. Doing so demonstrates solidarity with the children and families experiencing crisis in the United States while supporting a more just and humane process for all claimants in Canada.



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Patrick Baillie, Ph.D., LL.B.  
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cc. The Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness  
The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada