



January 28, 2019 (via email)

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

Dear Minister Hussien,

Last week (*January 24, 2019*), you announced a new pilot program to “enable smaller communities to enhance their economic, social and demographic vitality.”

If your government is a friend to rural Canada, it will come as a complete surprise to our members.

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that you presided over the closure of the Case Processing Centre (CPC) in Vegreville, which has devastated the local community and forced your employees to relocate to Edmonton or face a commute of over 100 kilometres each way. The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) urged your government to abandon this short-sighted decision for months and years – and yet you chose to remove a high-performing office from a rural community. The CPC had been a cornerstone of the community for over 20 years. With 250 workers — about five percent of the town’s population — it was one of the town’s largest employers.

This most recent announcement is a slap in the face to the people of Vegreville – a rural community drastically affected by the short-sighted decision of your own department and your Cabinet colleagues. PSAC believes that immigration is a powerful force for economic growth in rural communities. But it is hypocritical in the extreme to remove jobs from a vibrant rural Canada while claiming to support those very towns.

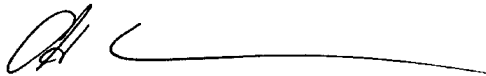
In your announcement you state that: “Immigration is a central pillar of Canada’s economic success. The economic and social benefits of immigration are apparent in communities across Canada. By creating an immigration pilot aimed at rural and northern communities, we’re looking to ensure that the benefits of immigration are shared across the country.”

The fact is that with your decision in regard to the Vegreville CPC, you have hurt a vibrant community with your policies. The PSAC has asked that you reconsider elements of your decision and open a satellite office of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada in Vegreville. After all, who knows better how to attract and support immigrant families to rural

communities than those who live in those communities. If we are to build a more open, tolerant and prosperous country then the advantages of economic growth must be felt by everyone.

We hope that you will take this opportunity to reflect on your actions as minister and take this opportunity to begin to make things right for the people of Vegreville and the public service workers who love that community. We all have a part to play in making immigration work for all our communities.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Aylward
National President
Public Service Alliance of Canada



Marianne Hladun
Regional Executive Vice-President,
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Eddy Bourque
National President
Canada Employment and Immigration Union

Cc: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Shannon Stubbs, MP for Lakeland
Michell Rempel, Conservative Critic for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Jenny Kwan, NDP Critic for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship