

Minister
of Immigration,
Refugees and Citizenship

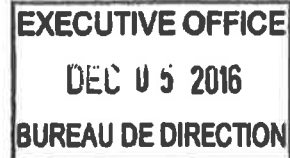


Ministre
de l'Immigration,
des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté

Ottawa, Canada K1A 1L1

NOV 30 2016

Ms. Robyn Benson
National President
Public Service Alliance of Canada
233 Gilmour Street, Suite 1100
Ottawa ON K2P 0P1



Dear Ms. Benson:

Thank you for your correspondence of November 2, 2016, concerning the relocation of the workload from the Case Processing Centre (CPC) in Vegreville to Edmonton.

Canadians expect their Government to make responsible decisions on spending that will address current challenges, account for future situations, and ensure tax dollars are spent on quality services to meet expectations of clients and provide program excellence. The relocation will also save money, as the new office space will be located within the Government of Canada's existing property inventory.

The building lease for the CPC expires in February 2019. The Department submitted its business requirements to Public Services and Procurement Canada in November 2015 so that work could begin on securing leasing options. These business requirements dictate the geographical boundaries for consideration of the lease renewal strategy. Vegreville will not meet these requirements. Furthermore, there have been ongoing tenant service issues at the current CPC location including hundreds of service calls related to plumbing and sanitary issues (67 service calls since August 2013) and frequent breakdowns of the heating and cooling systems (131 service calls since August 2013) in the building.

In an effort to respond to increased demand in various lines of business, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is relocating its CPC from Vegreville to Edmonton by December 2018.

IRCC intends to expand its operations in Alberta in the coming years. In negotiating a new lease, the Department has made the difficult decision to move its operations to Edmonton, the closest major city, where the proximity to universities, the availability of public transit and housing options, and career growth opportunities within the federal government will make it easier to recruit and retain both qualified and bilingual employees and to meet our growing needs. Currently, approximately 20% of the CPC staff commute from Edmonton to Vegreville.

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All current IRCC indeterminate employees will have the opportunity to continue their employment in their current positions once the office is relocated to Edmonton. Term employees at the time of the move will be offered employment at the new office.

We recognize this relocation will have an impact on staff and are making every effort to minimize those impacts. The Department has held multiple workshops to explain the relocation process and will continue to do so. IRCC management has also communicated the office relocation plan to union representatives, and will continue to work closely with staff throughout this transition period.

I have noted your concerns about the effect that the relocation of the CPC will have. Approximately 42% of the current staff in Vegreville will reach retirement age in the next five years. I note that, recruiting and retaining bilingual staff is crucial to maintaining functions and service standards at the CPC in the coming years. Over the past number of years, IRCC has used a variety of recruitment strategies at the CPC in Vegreville including:

- student recruitment;
- advertised opportunities open to the public across Canada;
- casual employment; and,
- student bridging.

To date, recruitment efforts to replace departing staff have been unsuccessful. From October 2015 to September 2016, 17% of staff at the CPC in Vegreville have left the workforce. This has posed considerable challenges to IRCC's capacity to maintain and grow its operations.

While I realize that this announcement has come as a disappointment to many people, I hope that the explanation provided will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John McCallum".

John McCallum, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship