OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

December 1, 2011

The Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, I write to express my concern over Bill C-4, the *Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act*.

For many years the Diocese of Niagara has been a proud holder of a Private Sponsorship Agreement with the Government of Canada. Over the years we have sponsored many refugee families; most recently through The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund's 50th Anniversary refugee sponsorship initiative. I am grateful for the funding Citizenship and Immigration Canada provided for this initiative; it enabled two of our churches to welcome a family from Iraq to Canada. I am also delighted with the government's commitment that by 2013 6500 refugees will be arriving in Canada each year under the private sponsorship program.

Our sponsorships have helped us live into our biblical tradition of 'welcoming the stranger' and to more fully experience what it truly means to love our neighbours. Underpinning these traditions is a moral imperative to respect the dignity of every human being; a value which I believe all Canadians can affirm. Yet Bill C-4 has the potential to severely impact the dignity of refugees fleeing persecution. This legislation will punish the refugees whom we – as Canadian and international citizens - have pledged to protect rather than the smugglers for whom it was intended. Moreover this legislation is unlikely to act as a deterrent as refugees will do what needs to be done in order to save their families. I believe that penalizing those who are already persecuted by threatening them with lengthy detention and by separating families is contrary to the Canadian way.

In solidarity with The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, I urge you to withdraw this proposed legislation based on the following considerations:

- Bill C-4 violates the Charter and Canada's international human rights obligations. While human smuggling is a serious problem, discriminating between the two classes of refugees (based upon mode of arrival) that Bill C-4 creates is not helpful.

The Right Reverend Michael A. Bird
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- Bill C-4 proposes mandatory detention without independent review. This is arbitrary detention and as such is contrary to the Charter and to international law.
- Bill C-4 refuses designated refugees the right to apply for permanent residence for five years and consequently for reunification with their children. This separation of families is unconscionable and a clear violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is my hope that in consultation with refugee serving organizations and agencies the Government of Canada will go back to the drawing board to address the problem of human smuggling in a way that does not penalize refugees but rather seeks to uphold the dignity of all human beings.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

The Right Reverend Michael Bird
Bishop of Niagara

cc: The Honourable Vic Toews, P.C., M.P.
Mr. Don Davies, M.P.
Mr. Keven Lamoureux, M.P.
Mr. André Bellavance, M.P.
Ms. Maria Mourani, M.P.
Mr. Jasbir Sandhu, M.P.
Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia, M.P.
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