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(Windsor West)



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Honourable Ahmed D. Hussen MP
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

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E-mail: Minister@cic.gc.ca

Dear Minister Hussen,

I am writing today regarding the surplus that the government of Canada has received from the price increases to Canadian passports since 2013. Today, a *Globe and Mail* article entitled, "Government has pocketed \$1-billion since 2013 increase in passport cost," provided information from an Access to Information Request detailing the financial surplus raised off the price increases to passports – and ultimately, off the backs of hard-working Canadians (attached).

For over a decade, I have raised my concerns over the costs of passports for Canadians – starting with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) which required Canadians crossing into the United States and at all ports of entry – to purchase and use an official passport rather than birth certificates or other previously acceptable documents. At the time, Canadians were paying \$87.00 for a 5-year passport and this put a burden on many Canadians and their families. Now, passport prices have increased substantially to \$120.00 to \$160.00 for Canadians in the country and between \$190.00 and \$260.00 for Canadians living abroad. This adds significant stress to Canadians' pocketbooks.

In March 2006, I questioned then Acting CEO of Passport Canada, Gary K. McDonald, about the actual costs and surpluses received by Passport Canada. At the time I questioned the smaller surpluses being raised by Passport Canada wherein the Act governing Passport Canada stated that the Agency should be operating on a cost-recovery basis that forbids user fees in excess of costs.

Today's article quotes Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) stating that Passport Canada still works on a cost-recovery basis. If this is the case, your government should be reviewing the passport fee structure and considering alternative options including ensuring that Canadians are receiving their passports at the lowest possible cost.

I am respectfully requesting that you consider my Private Member's Motion 8 on the Order Paper which states,

M-8 — December 7, 2015 — Mr. Masse (Windsor West) — That, in the opinion of the House, the government should conduct an audit of the Passport Office to ensure that Canadians can acquire passports at the lowest possible cost and that passport processing fees do not generate surplus revenues.

Furthermore, I have two other Private Member's motions that are currently on the Order Paper at this time regarding passports and costs to Canadian seniors and veterans which I also would like to reiterate their importance in light of the surplus at Passport Canada including:

M-2 — December 7, 2015 — Mr. Masse (Windsor West) — That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the contribution made to Canadian society by all of its seniors and make Canadian passports available at not more than half-price, to all Canadian citizens over the age of 65.

And, *M-4 — December 7, 2015 — Mr. Masse (Windsor West) — That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize and give thanks for the great sacrifices made by Canadian veterans in protecting our society and make Canadian passports available free of charge to all veterans of the Canadian forces.*

Both of these are viable alternatives that would significantly help our Canadian seniors and veterans.

I am respectfully requesting that you respond to this letter by including for me the information about where this surplus is going, and whether or not you will consider an audit and full review of the price of passports for Canadians. Ultimately, a \$1-billion surplus should not exist. As a cost-recovery operation, Canadians should only be paying the minimum costs associated with the manufacture and administration of their respective passport. Canadians deserve and want answers.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this letter. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. I look forward to your response.

Yours truly,



Brian Masse MP (Windsor West)
NDP critic for Innovation, Science and Economic Development

Attach (1).

CC: Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance