



The Honourable Raynell Andreychuk, Senator
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa ON K1A 0A4

March 24, 2017

Dear Senator Andreychuk:

Global Affairs Canada thanks the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade for the opportunity to provide a written response to the following statement by a member of the Senate Committee: *“To my mind, one of the central questions in our investigation is whether the Bill will hinder the re-establishment of “normal” diplomatic relations with Iran. The views of the government on this question are obviously germane.”*

Canada is cautiously exploring re-engagement with Iran in a step-by-step manner. The Government believes that it is through dialogue, not withdrawal and isolation, that it can advance Canada’s interests, including consular services to Canadians, and trade and foreign policy interests. Iran’s level of influence in the Middle East region is significant.

From the perspective of Global Affairs Canada, Bill S-219 would likely hinder the re-establishment of “normal” diplomatic relations with Iran for two reasons: 1) It would constrain the discretion and therefore the capacity of the Government to re-engage with Iran, and, 2) Iran would likely respond negatively to its introduction.

According to Senator Tkachuk, the stated intent of Bill S-219 is to “establish the specific terms upon which engagement with Iran is based”. Bill S-219 would shape and constrain the Government’s discretion regarding both the pace and the nature of discussions with Iran. Ultimately, Bill S-219 would therefore limit the capacity of the Government of Canada to pursue and eventually conclude a complex process to re-establish diplomatic ties with Iran.

While it is unclear exactly how Iran would respond to the introduction of Bill S-219 and any new constraints placed on Canada’s bilateral exchanges with Iran, it is unlikely that Iran would respond positively to the introduction of such a Bill. Given the key provisions of the Bill, in particular, linking new sanctions and the continuance of existing measures to Iran’s human rights performance, it is likely that Iran would react negatively to the introduction of the Bill. This negative Iranian reaction could serve to hinder the eventual re-establishment of “normal” diplomatic relations between Canada and Iran.



The Government has clearly and consistently indicated that re-engagement with Iran does not mean that Canada agrees with Iran's policies, and re-engagement will not be pursued at any cost. We will continue to hold Iran to account on issues of concern, including its human rights violations, its nuclear program, its ballistic missile program, its support for terrorism and regional policies. The process of re-engagement with Iran follows careful consideration of these factors and the Government believes that it is through this ongoing dialogue with Iran that it can ultimately advance the breadth of Canada's interests. In terms of human rights, for example, Canada has been successfully leading the annual United Nations General Assembly resolution on the situation of human rights in Iran since 2003. The resolution sends a strong message to the people of Iran and the Iranian government that Canada, and the international community, remains concerned about persistent human rights violations in Iran. The Government of Canada's approach to Iran and re-engagement has been, and will remain, cautious and incremental, with careful consideration given at every step of the way.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis
Assistant Deputy Minister for Europe, Middle East and Maghreb

- c.c. The Honourable Percy E. Downe, P.C., Senator
The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator
The Honourable Patricia E. Bovey, Senator
The Honourable Anne C. Cools, Senator
The Honourable Jane Cordy, Senator
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The Honourable Nicole Eaton, Senator
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The Honourable Thanh Hai Ngo, Senator
The Honourable Victor Oh, Senator
The Honourable Raymonde Saint-Germain, Senator
The Honourable Yuen Pau Woo, Senator