

COPE

July 10, 2019

The Right Honourable Justin P.J. Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Room 315-A, West Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Justin Trudeau,

In writing this letter, we, the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE), Vancouver's oldest progressive political party, respectfully request that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Minister of Immigration Ahmed D. Hussen, Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission take immediate action on the four specific demands outlined below.

- 1. To publicly denounce the incarceration of children, the separation of children from their families, and the violation of human rights at detention centres in the United States of America.** These violations have been documented and reported by U.S. Congress Commissions and United Nations envoys. The Government of Canada has an official mandate to protect human rights on an international level, especially those of children and refugees. We demand that you uphold your responsibility as the Government of Canada.
- 2. To immediately begin monitoring the implementation of all current international agreements regulating the treatment of refugees, including the "Safe Third Country Agreement" and "The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act".** These are bilateral commitments that address standard safe practices for refugee claimants and immigrant detainees in the United States and Canada. According to the Safe Third Country Agreement, only countries that truly respect human rights and offer a high degree of protection to asylum seekers may be designated as a "safe third country." Twenty-four people have died in ICE custody during the Trump administration, and many more are being detained in inhumane and unsafe conditions. By the guidelines of the Safe Third Country Agreement, the United States is not currently offering a reliable degree of protection for refugees applicants, and thus does not meet the qualifications to be a safe third country.
- 3. To immediately cease the detention and separation of children from their families in Canada, and consider humane monitoring models for migrants in the country.** We are requesting the end of this practice based on irrefutable scientific evidence and academic research from Canadian universities that suggest that children who live in detention centres, even for short periods for time, experience increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal ideation. Many also experience developmental delays. These health consequences often persist long after the children have been released, affecting their adjustment to life post-detention. According to the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), 144 minors were placed in Canadian detention centres between 2017 and 2018, and 110 minors have been detained since. The average length of detention for children in 2019 is

21 days. The detention of children is a reprehensible, immoral, and harmful practice that must be ended immediately.

d) To immediately request a public apology from the Minister of Finance, Bill Morneau, and executives responsible for buying \$5.9 million worth of stocks from Geo Group and Core Civic as investments for the Canadian Pension Plan. Geo Group and Core Civic have invested profusely in private detention centres across United States. COPE also asks the Government of Canada to take the necessary steps to legislate an end to the investment of public money in companies linked to unethical and discriminatory practices, such as the creation of detention centres that violate international human rights standards. Minister Morneau stated to the House of Commons that the decision to invest in these detention facilities represented the “highest standards of ethics.” Recently, these “ethical investments” were cancelled by the new C.P.P. board, who cited conflict of interest as the reason for the cancellation. Minister Morneau’s conduct on this file has been unacceptable, and we demand an apology.

We ask you to break the silence.

We ask you to proactively protect the human rights of children and refugees.

We ask you to end the detention of immigrant children in Canada.

We ask you to monitor our bilateral international agreements regarding the humane treatment of refugees.

We ask you to legislate an end to the investment of public money in companies that benefit when people suffer.

Canada has a horrific and well-documented history of separating Indigenous children from their families, from which we have learned the lasting and incessant impacts that family separation has on the lives of our people. It is our moral, ethical, and civic duty to fight any misconduct that echoes the social and cultural injustices from our past.

Prime Minister Trudeau, you can set us a new direction by speaking loudly against international human rights violations towards vulnerable populations. We demand your leadership.

In solidarity with the oppressed children and migrants of our world,



Nancy Trigueros
Co-Chair,
Coalition of Progressive Electors



Rider Cooley
Co-chair,
Coalition of Progressive Electors