



Hon. Marc Miller
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

January 12, 2024

Dear Minister Miller,

On behalf of the Canadian Paediatric Society, I am writing to express our support for your recent commitments to expand family-based temporary immigration measures for those seeking shelter and safety from conflict zones, including in Gaza and Sudan. Children are inherently worthy, regardless of where they are born or where they live. Yet children are being caught up in these conflicts resulting in physical injury or death, family separation, displacement, malnutrition, dehydration, trauma, school disruption, and toxic stress.

With daily images of children in danger and without adequate food, water or shelter, Canadians across the country are looking for ways to help. Welcoming and supporting refugees is one essential way we can support families in need. The longer displaced children remain unsettled, the greater the potential consequences to both their physical health and their emotional, developmental, and psychological well-being. Many of those coming to Canada through these immigration measures will have experienced significant trauma and will require care for unmet immediate and chronic health care needs. As children, youth, and their families seek safety in Canada, we must ensure that they have access to the services and supports they will require.

However, opening our borders to refugees is only the first step. To truly meet our obligations to newcomers to Canada we must ensure a basic minimum standard of living, including upholding their right to housing, education and healthcare. Too often immigrants and refugees fall through the cracks of our fractured and complicated systems. Jurisdictional issues, language and cultural barriers, difficulties accessing the Interim Federal Health Program and other crucial resources, and our current healthcare, housing and cost-of-living crises can make what is already an extremely difficult situation seem insurmountable.

Targeted efforts to reduce these barriers and support newcomer families to access essential services more easily must therefore be a priority across all levels of government. We can and must do more to support all those seeking safety and security in Canada. Paediatricians across the country are ready and willing to help plan for the full range of medical services that refugees will need upon their arrival.

Sincerely,

Jeff Critch, MD
CPS President