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

Dear Minister Hussen:

I am writing on behalf of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada concerning motion (ES 18-07 MSC) adopted by delegates at our Synod Assembly this year. This motion calls on the federal government to end travel loan repayments for refugees to Canada.

I welcome the beneficial changes your government has made to the Immigration Loans Program since February 2018. However, the users of this program have changed in composition and are now made up predominantly of refugees to Canada; refugees who leave their home countries not by choice, but by necessity, most often due to serious human rights abuses. The emotional strain of starting over, along with the financial stress of repayment of these loans, poses particular hardships to those who come here as refugees. The Canadian Council for Refugees estimates that refugee families begin their new life in Canada with a debt of up to \$10,000.

There is precedent for ending these loan repayments. Your government already waved the travel loan repayment for the 25,000 Syrian refugees who came to Canada between November 2015 and February 2016. I urge you to apply the same practice for all refugees and call for a timely phase out of the travel loan repayment for all refugees to Canada.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Michael J. Pryse, Bishop
Eastern Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
MJP:sc

Cc - The Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance