



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Shannon Stubbs
Member of Parliament
Lakeland

****Hardcopy to follow via mail****

The Honourable John McCallum, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON
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October 28th, 2016

RE: Closure and relocation of CPC Vegreville to Edmonton

Dear Minister McCallum,

I am writing to you regarding the decision to move the Case Processing Centre to Edmonton from Vegreville, a hardworking rural town in Lakeland.

This edict, which blindsided the community, will result in wide ranging, damaging, cumulative consequences for Vegreville and the surrounding areas, devastating the 280 people who work at CPC Vegreville. A quarter of the students in the town's school system are children of employees, and three local businesses are owned and operated by employee families. Jobs of 250 spouses of CPC Vegreville employees will be impacted by this decision, and the futures of all of these people and families are now uncertain. The IRC Case Processing Centre is one of the top 5 employers in Vegreville.

Given that I have asked questions in the House of Commons frequently during the past year about the almost unprecedented job losses and economic struggles particularly facing rural Albertans, I am confident you and your federal government colleagues will appreciate the extreme anxiety and escalating stress of several hundreds of people caused by the October 27, 2016 announcement. Now, they are understandably feeling insecure and are very worried about their livelihoods and futures, and were already facing very challenging circumstances. The shock at this deliberate removal of 280 jobs from Vegreville spread rapidly through the thousands of people in the town and surrounding areas. I'm sure it is also concerning to many Edmontonians, who have friends and family members in Vegreville and the rural communities just east of the city, or may be originally from that area themselves.

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I have been hearing from constituents - employees, spouses, farmers, business owners, community members and municipal leaders. Your government often cites consultation on important issues as a priority. Neither employees nor administrators at CPC Vegreville were consulted in advance. *No one* was consulted or sought for input about the economic impacts of the closure of CPC Vegreville on the town: not the local Member of Parliament, the local Member of the Legislative Assembly, the Vegreville Mayor, Vegreville Councillors, or town officials, nor any other local citizens, organizations, businesses, or stakeholders. I'm sure you will understand the widespread, overwhelming outrage of the people who will be impacted the most by this life altering decision.

Relocation is not an option for many residents. In fact, employees were advised relocation provisions only apply to approximately 135 indeterminate (permanent full time) staff, leaving more than half of the people who currently work there, many who have been there for several years, without coverage for moving. You can appreciate the practical and prohibitive barriers for employees whose families own small businesses in and near Vegreville, or against those who run family farm operations, nevermind the fact that the average house in Edmonton costs over \$100,000 more than in Vegreville, and there are currently already 100 houses on the market in town. Many people cannot just pick up and move, and many cannot afford, or manage, to commute more than three hours a day. This reality is even more galling in light of the fact that the CPC Vegreville is not a front line, walk-in service centre, and the vast majority of the work involves online processing through electronic applications, but at the October 27 announcement, I understand that employees were told that teleworking with the new Edmonton location will not be an option, nor considered.

Obviously, this decision will have a significant ripple effect on other businesses, on community organizations, and on all of Vegreville and area. Families and single parents will have to find alternative methods to get their kids to and from school, hockey practice, or dance rehearsal, or move their kids from their friends and existing teams and activities completely. People will also have less time and resources to give back to their community, and will no longer be able to volunteer for organizations and events, which is an aspect of Vegreville's community spirit that is particularly strong.

On behalf of the people I represent, I implore you to investigate this decision personally. I urge you to reverse it. I understand you are relying on advice provided to you, but today in Question Period in the House of Commons, you said there is "a very strong Business Case to shift this operation from Vegreville to Edmonton..." I must advise you this assertion contradicts what Department officials told employees at the October 27, 2016 meeting. I understand that, when asked directly whether a cost analysis on this decision was completed in advance, the answer was "no".

In fact, Mike Brecht, the Prairie representative for the Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU) said: "A meeting was held with Paul Armstrong and Robert Orr. During this meeting, the union asked the question as to what was done to ensure fiscal responsibility. Was there a cost analysis done? Was the option of opening a satellite office in Edmonton considered? The response to both questions was no."

How can you determine the strength or validity of the business case if a cost analysis was not completed?

You also said "*Everybody* in Vegreville will have an opportunity to work at the new location..." but with less than half of the employees to whom relocation coverage provisions would apply, what security can

you actually offer to term employees, who have no guarantee their contracts will be renewed once the move is complete? Most employees have been working with casual contracts or as term employees for several years. How can you expect them to uproot their families, attempt to sell their home in a very challenged market, likely losing money on their houses and having to purchase or rent residences that are more expensive in Edmonton, with no access to relocation reimbursement, only to find out their job is not being extended passed the end of their contract? Surely, you can understand that this clearly means *everybody* in CPC Vegreville will *not at all* be able to *actually* have that "opportunity".

I would very much welcome a meeting with you or any of your colleagues to discuss the *human consequences*, as many Ministers often say in the House of Commons about job losses in Alberta, of this ill-advised decision, and the impending impacts on the community and the region.

I suggest it behooves you to consult directly with administrators and employees at CPC Vegreville, and with provincial and municipal representatives, to ensure your due diligence regarding this decision, that is of such magnitude, and involves such major repercussions.

Sincerely,



Shannon Stubbs, MP

Lakeland

cc

The Honourable Judy Foote, P.C., M.P.
Jessica Littlewood, MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville
Mayor Myron Hayduk
Vegreville Town Council
Cliff Craig
Mike Brecht

