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410 5th Street S. Suite 214  
Hallock MN 56728  
(218)-843-2670

August 3, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Duke  
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington D.C. 20528

RE: Asylum Seeker/Refugee Issue

We are asking for your attention to the matter of the asylum seekers and refugees crossing the US-Canadian border between Kittson County Minnesota and the Municipality of Emerson Franklin Manitoba. This year has seen a dramatic upturn in the number of people attempting to cross the international border between our 2 jurisdictions, with the predominant direction of travel being to enter Canada from the United States. This issue has been complicated by the terms of the Canada-United States Safe Third Country Agreement. Because of the terms of the agreement, these individuals cannot be accepted at the normal border crossing points and are being turned away by the Canadian authorities. However, if they cross the border somewhere in between checkpoints, they are accepted and processed under different rules.

Since mid-winter, refugees and asylum seekers have been risking their lives crossing our border. They cross in the middle of the night and risk getting lost in the dark. Our border is wooded with areas of swamps and other bodies of water that make transit even in daylight difficult. Our woods have large populations of both wolves and bears which could present a danger to those wandering around. Many refugees and asylum seekers spent January-March streaming across the border in winter weather that few of them were prepared for. One has lost fingers and toes due to frost bite while another succumb to hypothermia and died. In addition, there is also the issue of protecting the property rights and personal safety of the residents of Kittson County and the Municipality of Emerson Franklin.

Correcting this problem should easily be within the power of both federal governments. Unlike the situation on the southern border of the United States, neither government seems to be discouraging the flow of migrants here. We ask that both governments relax the requirements for crossing the border between the United States and Canada and allow these individuals to safely enter Canada through established border checkpoints. With much colder weather only a few months away, it is our hope that some action can be taken to reduce the chances of more senseless deaths occurring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty Younggren".

Betty Younggren  
Chairperson, Kittson County Board of Commissioners

Cc: The Right Honourable Justin P.J. Trudeau  
Honourable Ralph Goodale Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness  
Honourable Ahmed D.Hussen Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
M.P. Ted Falk Government of Canada  
Premier Brian Pallister Province of Manitoba  
M.L.A Cliff Graydon Province of Manitoba

Cc: President Donald Trump  
The Honorable Al Franken United States Senate  
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar United States Senate  
The Honorable John Hoeven United States Senate  
The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp United States Senate  
The Honorable Collin Peterson United State House of Representatives  
The Honorable Kevin Cramer United State House of Representatives



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

January 17, 2018

Ms. Betty Younggren  
Chairperson  
Kittson County Board of Commissioners  
410 5<sup>th</sup> Street S., Suite 214  
Hallock, Minnesota 56728

Dear Chairperson Younggren:

Thank you for your August 3, 2017 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf. Your letter expressed concerns regarding individuals attempting to cross the United States – Canada border between Kittson County, Minnesota, and the Municipality of Emerson-Franklin, Manitoba outside of established border-crossing points.

The treatment of asylum seekers at the northern border by the U.S. and Canadian Governments is governed by the 2002 *Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada For Cooperation in the Examination of Refugee Status Claims from Nationals of Third Countries* (Agreement) and incorporated into the United States Immigration and Nationality Act, Code of Federal Regulations and applicable Canadian law and regulations. The Agreement establishes a framework for allocating responsibility between the United States and Canada whereby one country or the other (but not both) will assume responsibility for processing the claims of certain asylum seekers who are traveling from Canada into the United States or from the United States into Canada.

The Department of Homeland Security and its Canadian Government counterparts have been discussing these irregular northbound migration flows and related issues of mutual concern. Canadian and U.S. authorities from multiple agencies are working closely to exchange information on these flows in order to mitigate the flow of individuals crossing the U.S.-Canadian border unlawfully. These efforts also include an outreach campaign by Canadian officials to various population centers in the United States to dispel myths about Canada's immigration system that may be fueling some of the migration. This is an issue that is important to both countries and your concerns are well-founded.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "L. Francis Cissna".

L. Francis Cissna  
Director