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May 17, 2017

Honourable Rona Ambrose
Leader of the Official Opposition
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

Dear Rona Ambrose,

On April 21, 2017 the president of the Iranian-Canadian Congress (ICC), Bijan Ahmadi, sent you a letter on behalf of the ICC. In this letter, he expressed ICC's objection to your criticisms of the federal government's reduction of some of Canada's sanctions on Iran in February 2016.

The Iranian-Canadian Congress Members' Association (ICCMA) feels obliged to inform your office about several important points concerning the Iranian Community in Canada. The members of the Iranian-Canadian community have escaped from the tyranny of the Iranian regime and are divided on politics related to Iran. Despite this division in views, the ICC was created as a not-for-profit, non-partisan and non-religious organization. As per the organization by-laws the ICC Board of Directors is prohibited to support partisan views. Regretfully, Bijan Ahmadi has advocated on behalf of a select fraction of the Iranian community. His publicised affiliation with the Liberal Party, is another factor that makes it difficult for him to maintain the necessary neutrality to govern a community organization with a mandate of strengthening unity. The ICC Board of Directors' overt lack of neutrality has created a division in the community and as a result, the number of members in ICC has dropped to 400, out of a community of 300,000 members.

It is the purpose of the ICCMA to inform you that ICC president has presented a biased view on the matter. It is our hope that by informing Canadian society, media, and politicians, like yourself, we will be able to give a more accurate opinion about the political views and requests of Iranian Canadians.

Sincerely
Medi Shams on behalf of Iranian-Canadian Congress Members Association

CC: Minister Chrystia Freeland, Parliamentary Secretary Matt DeCoursey, MP H el ene Laverdi ere, MP Elizabeth May, MP Majid Jowhari, MP Ali Ehsassi, Bijan Ahmadi, Iranian Canadian Congress

Attached: Copy of Bijan Ahmadi's letter

Date: April 21, 2017

Kind Attention: Honourable Rona Ambrose, Leader of the Official Opposition, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada.

During Question Period at the House of Commons on April 11th, 2017, you, as the leader of the Official Opposition, criticized the federal government for easing some of Canada's sanctions on Iran in February 2016 and called for restoration of sanctions on Iran. On behalf of the Iranian Canadian Congress I am writing to express our objection to your remarks, which advocate for perpetuation of the failed policies of diplomatic and economic disengagement from Iran initially implemented by your predecessor, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Canada's decision to ease sanctions on Iran came as a result of the multilateral nuclear agreement between P5+1 countries and Iran or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and its ratification in the UN Security Council. According to UNSC Resolution 2231, all UN member states shall comply with the terms of the agreement and lift nuclear related sanctions on Iran. In February 2016 the Government of Canada under Prime Minister Trudeau followed its international obligations under the terms of the JCPOA and lifted some of its sanctions on Iran. Since then, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has consistently found that Iran has fully complied with the terms of the JCPOA, most recently in February 24th, 2017. Therefore, your remarks on April 11th calling on the Government of Canada to restore its sanctions on Iran are in contradiction with Canada's international obligations.

As a responsible member of the United Nations and a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Canada must not only comply with the JCPOA but must also play a leading role and encourage all parties to respect the nuclear agreement, an agreement which has significantly allayed the potential for conflict and nuclear proliferation in the Middle East region.

Furthermore, the policies of disengagement and sanctions implemented by the previous federal government harmed Canadians' economic interests generally, and Iranian-Canadians specifically.

Canadian businesses at large have not been able to access Iran's untapped market of 80 million people. A 2016 study found that Canada lost between 1.18 and 4.69 billion dollars in the years between 2010-2014 in exports as a result of sanctions on Iran.

Iranian-Canadians have suffered disproportionately in the years after the former government broke diplomatic relations with Iran, closed the Canadian embassy in Tehran and, against all international norms, expelled Iranian diplomats from Ottawa. When relations were broken in 2012, Iranian-Canadians suddenly found themselves unable to access consular services and were faced with considerable difficulty when attempting to acquire visitor visas for their relatives still living in Iran. A formal parliamentary petition asking the federal government to re-establish diplomatic relations with Iran has gathered nearly 16,000 signatures from across Canada, while a counter petition sponsored by MP Peter Kent advocating for continuation of the policy of disengagement and withdrawal gathered only 600 signatures.

For Canada to be a constructive player in the world, it needs to promote respect for human rights, peace and stability through dialogue and engagement. Disengaging from Iran effectively eliminates any positive influence Canada might be able to have in Iran and significantly reduces our influence in the region.

We therefore ask you and your party to take the above into account, reconsider your policies towards Iran and cease advocating for demonstrably failed policies which have harmed Canadian businesses, Iranian-Canadians, and Canada's international standing.

Sincerely,

*Bijan Ahmadi
President
Iranian Canadian Congress*