

The Honourable Jason Kenney
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Dear Mr. Kenney,

I am writing to voice my concern over the recent appointment of Doug Cryer to the Immigration Review Board.

Among the many grounds for refugee status is the fear of persecution based on sexual orientation.

Doug Cryer is on record as not only opposing same-sex marriage, but denouncing homosexuality. Surely this disqualifies him from effectively determining whether or not gays and lesbians should be granted refugee status in Canada. Surely this puts his judgement in assessing danger of persecution into question? And just how safe might a potential refugee claimant feel in disclosing their sexual orientation and their fear of persecution to Mr. Cryer?

I understand that in defending the decision to appoint Mr. Cryer, the IRB has said that he (like all other appointments) must adhere to the board's code of conduct. What is the government's plan for tracking this?

The appointment of Mr. Cryer brings the whole system into sharp focus. As you know, the refugee panel consists of ONE person. This means that there is no check and balance on an individual board member's bias. And, there is no substantive appeal process – limited to procedural questions, not the actual merits of the claim.

This appointment underlines the serious weaknesses of the refugee system. Our union is on record calling for an overhaul to the immigration and refugee system to make it more accountable, transparent, equitable, and democratic.

We are deeply troubled that you have appointed a person who is against full human rights for lesbian and gays to a tribunal that is responsible for protecting human rights.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Ken Lewenza
CAW National President

Cc: NDP Critic for Citizenship and Immigration
Liberal Critic for Citizenship and Immigration
Vinay Sharma, Director, CAW Human Rights Department
Helen Kennedy, Egale Canada