

December 7, 1999

The Honourable Elinor Caplan, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration  
365 Laurier Avenue West  
20th Floor, Jean Edmonds South Tower  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

Dear Minister:

**Re: Processing Claims for Refugee Status by Fujian Migrants**

On October 29, you received a letter from Elizabeth Bryson and Gordon Maynard of the Citizenship and Immigration Law Section of the Canadian Bar Association, seeking your action to ensure fair and expeditious processing of the refugee claims made by Fujian migrants in BC. We are writing to echo their concerns.

The issue is quite simply access to justice. Refugee claimants must be ensured that legal representation is available to prepare relevant necessary forms and to ready their cases for hearing. The matters at stake in refugee determination hearings are far too serious for claimants to go before the IRB unrepresented.

Canada is a fair country, committed to respecting the due process rights of all those within our borders. We cannot ignore fundamental principles because the numbers and cost are high. Without resolving the issues of adequate funding for representation and access to counsel, we risk irrevocable damage to the integrity of the process not only for these claimants but for future claimants as well.

The BC immigration Bar has offered a number of accommodations with a view to resolving these claims fairly and quickly. Even so, this situation requires cooperation and resources from both levels of government. The federal government must assure funding to the Legal Services Society, and facilitate moving at least some of the hearings to Vancouver.

We respectfully urge prompt coordination of federal efforts with those of the BC government, for a commitment of financial resources and dispersal of detainees, to accommodate proper processing of these refugee claims.

Yours very truly,

Eugene Meehan  
President

Mayland McKimm  
President, CBA - British Columbia