

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Lottery system for parent and grandparent sponsorship not living up to government's claims

The current Liberal government insists it is committed to family reunification.

However, the reality is something altogether different. Families wanting to sponsor their parents and grandparents are now forced to participate in a lottery system where 10,000 applicants are randomly selected and then invited to submit an application. The current government claims this new system is more fair, transparent and improves access to the application process, yet it is anything but, and fails to address the existing problems of the immigration system.

The current Liberal government campaigned on a promise of doubling the number of immigration applications for parents and grandparents that could be submitted to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) each year to 10,000. However, at the beginning of January 2016, they announced that they were keeping this number at 5,000. It was only after we, the Official Opposition, put pressure on the government to keep their election commitments that former minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship John McCallum, agreed to raise the intake to 10,000.

In December 2016, Minister McCallum announced changes on how sponsorship applications would be submitted to IRCC under the Parent and Grandparent Program. Individuals wanting to sponsor their parents or grandparents to immigrate to Canada would have 30 days to complete an online form to express their interest in sponsoring their parents or grandparents. The online form would be available starting Jan. 3, 2017 and sponsors would have 30 days to submit the form to IRCC. Once the submission period closed, IRCC would then randomly choose 10,000 individuals from those who completed the online form and those people would be invited to submit their completed sponsorship application package.

The current Liberal government's change to a lottery system for the Parents and Grandparents Program is a total abdication of responsibility. They are leaving the system to chance instead of making improvements in a systemic and purposeful way. The new system has essentially become luck of the draw as to whether you may immigrate to Canada or not. The current Immigration Minister must take leadership and look through a management lens if he actually wants to improve the processes.

While the current Liberal government claims the new system will make the process "more fair and transparent," stakeholders and families are telling us that they weren't given any information or indication as to when the process would be complete. Failing to communicate to potential newcomers and their families does not indicate an open and transparent process as the current government claims.

The changes to the Parents and Grandparents Program are just another example of how the current Liberal government has failed to show leadership, efficiency and transparency with the immigration file. Regrettably, this failure is at the expense of Canadian families who want to be reunited with their loved ones. Canadians deserve better from their government.

