

Minister  
of Foreign Affairs



Ministre  
des Affaires étrangères

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G2

JUL 27 2007

Mr. Mark Holland, M.P.  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Holland:

Thank you for your letter of July 9, 2007, regarding Canada's engagement in Sri Lanka.

The Government of Canada is deeply concerned by the renewal of the conflict in Sri Lanka, and by the consequences it has for the safety of civilians. Canada remains prepared to assist in peace talks when they are renewed. Until then, its priorities in Sri Lanka will focus on supporting efforts aimed at protecting civilians and providing humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

The Canadian government believes that there can be no military solution to the conflict. Canada calls on all parties to the conflict to renounce violence and return to negotiations in order to find a peaceful political solution to the conflict that satisfies the legitimate aspirations of all citizens, regardless of language, religion, or ethnicity. Canada remains committed to continuing its role, through the work of the Forum of Federations, in providing technical assistance and advice to the parties on political power-sharing.

In concert with like-minded countries and through international forums such as the United Nations, Canada will continue to raise its concerns with the Government of Sri Lanka regarding reports of human rights violations. Canada urges the Government of Sri Lanka to respect its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, to help facilitate access to affected areas by humanitarian workers, and to allow for international human rights monitors. Canada is pleased to have nominated a Canadian expert to the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP) to oversee and monitor the Sri Lankan Presidential Commission of Inquiry into grave violations of human rights. The Commission of Inquiry was created by the Government of Sri Lanka to investigate, inquire and report on alleged violations of human rights in that country. Canada is currently participating in the IIGEP, which is working to ensure that the Commission of Inquiry remains objective and transparent, presents credible findings, and offers valuable solutions.

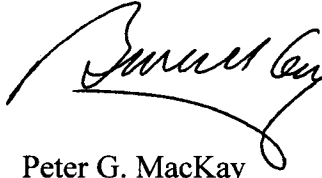
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Canada

You suggest in your letter that Canada consider opening a consulate in Jaffna. In 2006, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada completed a review of Canada's representation abroad and concluded that Canadians are adequately served by the High Commission in Colombo. However, mindful of the difficulties involved in travel to the capital, Canada has been working with like-minded governments and various international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, to engage the Government of Sri Lanka to find solutions to facilitate easier movement between Jaffna and the rest of the country.

I hope this information is of help to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter G. MacKay", written in a cursive style.

Peter G. MacKay

c.c. The Honourable Diane Finley, P.C., M.P.