



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
SW1P 4DF

24 April 2019

*Sajid,*

### Visa Fees for Commonwealth Armed Forces Personnel

We write to seek your support to end visa fees for Commonwealth servicemen and women in our Armed Forces and applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

As you will know current legislation exempts Commonwealth personnel from immigration controls during the period of their service, and upon discharge they are eligible to apply for ILR, providing they have served for a minimum of four years.

However the application costs for a single person ILR have increased 119% in the past five years to £2,389. This means that a service leaver wishing to settle with a spouse and two children would face a bill of almost £10,000 to continue to live in the UK.

We believe that on the one hand this is a very high cost for servicemen and women, and on the other it doesn't reflect the respect in which all those prepared, if need be, to put their life on the line for our country, are held. The cost seems out of proportion to the actual costs to the taxpayer of the immigration work involved.

The result is that currently many service leavers are forced to rely on financial support from charities such as the Royal British Legion, who provided £36,000 in grants for visa fees last year alone, or else face either leaving the UK or separating their family unit.

In terms of numbers involved, our understanding is that as of 1 October 2018 there were 4,710 regular and reserve Commonwealth citizens in active service and approximately 400 Commonwealth service leavers apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain each year. These numbers are likely to rise in forthcoming years due to the announced intention of HM Armed Forces to increase its intake of Commonwealth personnel to recruit 1,250 per year.

So in business terms the current revenue raised by these charges is modest – between £1 and 4 million a year (based on 400 applications x £2,389 x 1-4). But the value in goodwill lost or part lost through this charge at the moment servicemen and women leave the armed forces is considerable – and it irks many members of the public that our nation looks mean spirited to those who volunteered to join us.

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

In the short term this problem could be remedied by amending the annually set Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations to exclude Commonwealth armed forces personnel and their dependents. A longer-term legislative solution might be to amend the provisions regarding armed forces immigration requirements set out in the Immigration Act 1971.

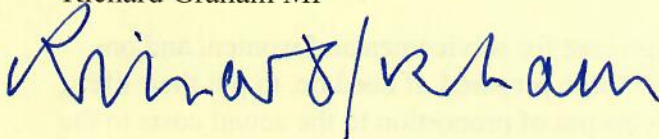
Any such change would also be in line with the spirit if not the letter of the Armed Forces Covenant, which dictates that all those who have served in the UK armed forces should be treated fairly.

The Armed Forces families support our Armed Forces Personnel through thick and thin, often making significant personal sacrifices to do so and their commitment to our nation should not be forgotten. Equally, no veteran who has served this country from a commonwealth nation should risk having their family split up due to not being able to afford these costs.

We would be grateful if you could look into this issue and consider what can be done to support those members of the Commonwealth Armed Forces community who wish to settle in the UK. We would of course be happy to explain further with a delegation representing the 133 MPs who have signed their support below.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Graham MP

Handwritten signature of Richard Graham in blue ink, appearing as 'Richard Graham'.

Madeleine Moon MP

Handwritten signature of Madeleine Moon in blue ink, appearing as 'Madeleine Moon'.