

30 October 2014

TO: The Immigration and Integration Affairs Committee

Greetings.

I am an American whose family is here on the Green Card Scheme. I wrote to members of the Immigration and Integration Affairs Committee individually, but it has been recommended to me to write a letter just to the committee, also for publication on the website. I want to relate to every person serving on this committee the significant personal and financial cost that the retroactive application of the extension rules will impose upon current Green Card holders. The new extension rules (particularly the extension rule requiring the Green Card holder to earn at least 315,000 DKK annually in order to obtain a second extension), absolutely should not be applied to people who came here based on the prior representations that the Danish government made. To do so is fundamentally unjust, financially harmful, discriminatory and will discourage anyone, no matter how talented or needed, from coming to Denmark. Government should make life predictable, not arbitrary. Government should not foster the financial destruction of a family. Just like people should abide by their promises, so should government. We don't trust people who violate business deals; we should not trust governments who violate business deals.

In my family, my husband Eric Olmanson (PhD in Geography from the University of Wisconsin) is the actual Green Card holder, while I (Juris Doctor from the University of Wisconsin, with sixteen years as a licensed attorney) am technically the accompanying spouse, although I qualify for a Green Card in my own right (we did it this way because it was cheaper for me to apply as an accompanying spouse). We arrived in Denmark with our two daughters, age 6 and 10, in April this year.

Not everyone who applies for the Green Card scheme does so just for the job. I had an excellent position as an attorney back home and was rather high up in state government. In fact, I was Assistant Legal Counsel to the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. I made \$84,000 per year, plus excellent fringe benefits (pension, vacation, health and dental insurance, life insurance), which brought my effective salary up to over \$110,000 per year. My husband picked up lectureships at the University of Wisconsin, and also wrote institutional histories, on commission. We had our home paid off (and we owned another home outright as well) and were financially settled. However, for philosophical reasons we sought to come to Denmark.

We walked away from the financial security we had in America to come to Denmark, based on representations made by Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment that extension would be based on #1 Eric working an average of 10 hours per week, #2 none of us committing any crimes, and #3 we would not request or accept any money under the Active Social Welfare Act. There was no requirement that people would need to earn at least 315,000 DKK annually in order to obtain a second extension.

Coming to Denmark cost our family close to \$40,000, not counting the tens of thousands of dollars in income we have lost as a result of me resigning from my position in state government to come here. We cashed in my deferred income of over \$20,000. We cashed in the savings plans we had put together for our daughters' future university education. We used both my savings and my husbands's savings. Additionally, we sold our collection of many thousands of books (I'm not exaggerating; we owned enough books to furnish a small town's library) for a small fraction of what we paid for them and for a small fraction of what it would cost for us to replace them, if we were to return to the US.

Now that we are here and have walked away from our financial security, and now that we have infused tens of thousands of dollars into the Danish economy, the Danish government is changing the rules and is pulling the rug out from underneath us. Suddenly we are told that in order to get our second extension, my husband will need to make at least 315,000 DKK annually. This was not in any way, shape, or form part of the deal at the time we spent money applying, nor was it at the time we spent money coming here. This income requirement simply should be inapplicable *at any point in time* to people who made their decision to spend money applying and then coming here prior to the reforms being enacted.

Both Eric and I were fully aware that it would take us 4-5 years to establish ourselves in Denmark. We both were fully aware that he would not be getting a teaching position until he learned Danish. We know that I will need to learn Danish, plus take additional law classes on EU contract law and international taxation, before I can even be hired as in-house counsel. It was our plan to take whatever jobs were available while we learned Danish, which we estimate will take us 2-4 years to learn.

Based on the representations made on the newtodenmark.dk website (which is maintained collectively by the Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment), we knew that we qualified for the Green Card Scheme. Based on the representations made on thenewtodenmark.dk website, we knew that (at least under the rules in effect now and the rules in effect when we applied in 2013) we would qualify for both of the extensions. However, there is no way that people like us will earn enough money (315,000 DKK annually) to qualify for the second extension under the new rules. We are not engineers. We are not IT professionals. We are not doctors or dentists. People like us need several years to learn the language before anyone will hire us for a professional position in our fields.

Had we known that the Danish Parliament intended to enact new extension rules and apply the new extension rules to people like us, we never, ever, ever would have even applied for the Green Card at all, because we know that neither of us will be making enough money yet by the time we are required to apply for our extension.

Had we known that the Danish Parliament intended to enact new extension rules and apply the new extension rules to people in our situation, I never would have resigned from my attorney position in Wisconsin. I never would have cashed in my deferred income. We never would have cashed in our daughters' educational funds. Although we don't like the US rates of gun violence, we would have taken our chances with that in the US and kept my good attorney position there, which I can never get back.

Had we been able to foresee that the Danish Parliament would apply the new extension rules to people who had come here based on different representations, we never would have interrupted our daughters' education in the United States. They were in a good school and were progressing well. But based on the representations that the Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment made, we decided that it would be in their long-term interests for us to come to Denmark and for them to learn Danish.

Had we been able to foresee the new income requirement of at least 315,000 DKK annually, we never would have infused tens of thousands of our American dollars into the Danish economy; we would have just stayed home. It doesn't escape me that the proposed expulsion of Green Card holders not earning least 315,000 DKK annually do not include any financial reparations for those Green Card

holders who infused foreign money into the Danish economy (application fees, travel fares, housing costs far in excess of the costs back home and so forth) based on the Danish Government's prior representations. If I had wanted to spend a small fortune in Denmark and then return to my home country, I would have come as a tourist.

Like many Americans, I am, myself, a genetic melting pot. My ancestors were mostly from Ireland, Britain, Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Austria and Poland, with a few from South Asia, and, as I was surprised to learn within the past few years, Africa. My ancestors were mostly Christian, but a few were Jewish (and, of course, my slave ancestors would have come to the New World with some other set of beliefs).

While there is no shortage of atrocities that various of my ancestors faced over the years, what the Danish government is planning to do to Green Card holders who don't earn enough money brings to mind the repeated expulsions that my Jewish ancestors faced from almost everywhere they lived in Europe. For Denmark to keep the tens of thousands of dollars we have infused into its economy, but then expell us us for not meeting new terms that were not part of the original bargain is the same sort of maltreatment-by-tyrant that my Jewish ancestors faced throughout the centuries.

When I look at the demographics of the current Green Card holders who will likely be expelled since they won't be earning at least 315,000 DKK annually by the time their second renewal comes up, the plan seems to be tantamount to ethnic cleansing, with the victims this time around by-and-large being moderate Muslims (after all, it isn't Europeans who were induced by the Danish government to come to Denmark on the Green Card scheme; rather, the Green Card holders are highly educated and hard working people most of whom have darker skin than the average Dane). Does Denmark really want to model itself after the behavior of Charles VI of the Habsburg Empire, with simply a different social group being the victims this time around?

In sum, it is utterly unjust, financially destructive, and a violation of basic human rights, to apply the 315,000 DKK requirement for a second extension to existing Green Card holders who made their decision to apply, and then to come to Denmark, based on the old extension criteria. Please eliminate this provision in the law and continue to apply the old extension criteria to Green Card holders who came here under the rules currently in effect. At no time should there be any minimum annual income requirement (let alone one of 315,000 DKK annually) imposed on people who came here based on a different promise made by the Danish government.

Sincerely,

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