



Guide to meeting with local MPs: Refugee Rights Day 2016

April 4 is Refugee Rights Day in Canada: this day is the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1985 Singh decision, which recognized that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects refugees' fundamental rights.

This year the CCR is encouraging people to mark Refugee Rights Day by meeting with their local MP.

We suggest that people focus on:

- Refugee family reunification
- Refugees from other regions (in addition to Syrian refugees)
- Refugee claimants

Organizing the meeting

1. To find out how to contact your MP, go to: <http://bit.ly/qyxfkQ>
2. You can organize the meeting jointly with others in the riding, including CCR members, AI members, refugee lawyers, other organizations) to show that there is a broad and coordinated group concerned for refugees. Find other CCR members on this map of ridings: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/member-organizations-and-ridings>.
3. Contact your MP's office as soon as possible to request a meeting on or around April 4.
 - The House is not sitting 25 March-8 April so there is a better chance to meet MPs in their riding.
 - Say that you are participating in a national activity coordinated by the Canadian Council for Refugees to mark Refugee Rights Day.
 - If appropriate, invite them to meet at your organization and let them know that this will be a great way for the MP to express their support for refugees (and to get to know the organization).
 - If you are organizing the meeting jointly with other organizations, mention them.
 - Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss key current challenges facing refugees (see three focuses above).
 - Ask for a meeting of an hour if possible. Make sure you know how much time your MP has given to you and don't plan for more.

Planning the meeting

4. Identify the people who will attend the meeting (probably no more than 5-6 max). You should try to include some people who live in the MP's riding, someone who is personally affected by one of the issues and people who can speak to each of the issues.
5. Find out what your MP has been saying about refugees. A good resource is <https://openparliament.ca/>.

6. Review the proposed agenda and CCR documents prepared for the meeting. Discuss how the issues are relevant to the local riding. Decide who will speak to each agenda item.
7. Make sure that everyone attending the meeting has a common understanding of the objectives of the meeting, each person's role and how long each person will speak for. There may be suggestions for extra items to bring to the MP: bear in mind that having too many items on the agenda makes it less effective. You also need to leave time for the MP to ask you questions.
8. You may want to do some practice runs, especially if it is your first time meeting an MP. Time your presentation to get a sense of how much you can say in the allotted time. Have someone play the MP and interrupt you and ask the hard questions (sometimes the MP says nothing at all – which can be even harder).

The meeting

Proposed agenda

1. Introductions (5 minutes)
2. Refugee Rights Day: celebrating the 1985 Singh decision (3 minutes)
3. Refugee family reunification (10 minutes)
4. Refugees from other regions (in addition to Syrian refugees) (10 minutes)
5. Refugee claimants (10 minutes)
6. Conclusion (5 minutes)

Notes

- *Introductions:* All participants should introduce themselves briefly, highlighting the organizations represented, membership in the CCR and any connections with the MP (e.g. those who live in the riding, previous contacts with the MP).
- *Refugee Rights Day in Canada:* mention briefly that April 4 is the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1985 Singh decision, which recognized that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects refugees' fundamental rights. Underline the importance of the Charter for refugees.
- *Refugee family reunification, Refugees from other regions (in addition to Syrian refugees), Refugee claimants:* Give the MP the CCR handout and go over each of the issues. Illustrate them with concrete examples. Explain how the issue affects people in the MP's riding. Give the MP an opportunity to ask questions about each issue. If you don't have answers to all the questions, you can offer to get back to them. Ask the MP to respond to the CCR's recommendations: do they support the recommendations? If yes, what can they do concretely to support them? If not, what would they support?
- *Conclusion:* Thank the MP for the meeting, review any commitments for follow up on either side, and mention any upcoming events to which the MP is invited.

After the meeting:

- Send a letter to thank your MP for the meeting and include any additional information from your discussion. Respond to any other points that you had agreed to during the meeting.
- Send a summary of your meeting to the CCR at region@ccrweb.ca, including how your MP responded to the issues and any follow-up questions or actions.