



Support Bill C-280 calling for the implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division

1. Plan the meeting

- Plan your remarks carefully and be selective. You can't hope to communicate everything. It is better for the Senator to go away with a clear message, than to be confused by too much information.
- If possible, find out in advance a bit about what the Senator has done or said relating to refugees in general. You can do a search on the Parliamentary website at: www.parl.gc.ca to find your senator and his/her biography.

2. During the meeting

Here are some suggestions to keep the Senator or their assistant engaged and interested during the first minutes of your meeting, by phone or in person. Keep your comments brief to leave time for an engaging discussion with the Senator and ask them for their commitments, instead of presenting to him/her for the entire meeting. Insist on a straight answer. Does he or she agree or disagree with you?

This structure is meant to serve as a guideline, not as a rigid and only approach to your meeting with the Senator.

a) Introduction / Ice Breaker (1 minute)

- Thank the Senator for their time and the opportunity to speak to them. Present yourself and if you live/work in their region or province.
- Explain that you are part of a nation-wide organization representing over 180 organizations, the Canadian Council for Refugees, dealing with refugee and immigration issues who are visiting Senators to discuss the importance of implementing the Refugee Appeal Division. Bill C-280, calling for the implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division, is now before the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights.

b) Identify the Issue (1 minute)

You are asking the Senator to support Bill C-280 and to pass it through the Committee stage as quickly as possible. This bill calls for the immediate implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD), as outlined in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). To date, the sections of the Act regarding the Refugee Appeal Division have not been implemented.

- **The bill is important.** Providing refugee claimants with their right to appeal may save lives. Wrong decisions at the refugee hearing that go uncorrected can lead to refugees being returned to persecution, torture and even death. Contrary to much popular opinion, there is currently **no** appeal on the merits for refugee claimants – the limited recourses that are available are incapable of correcting many errors in refugee determination.
- **The bill needs to be passed quickly.** It is already 5 ½ years since the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act came into effect without implementing the right of appeal for refugees foreseen by the Act. As a result, for over five years refugee claimants have been having their fate determined by a single decision maker in a system never approved by Parliament. Correcting this injustice is long overdue.
- **The Senate Committee should not spend a lot of time studying the bill.** The bill simply calls for the implementation of legislation already studied and passed by the Senate. The Commons Committee took this position and heard only a small number of witnesses before proceeding quickly to clause by clause.
- **The bill should not be amended to delay further the coming into effect of the Refugee Appeal Division.** The Refugee Appeal Division was almost ready to be implemented in 2002 – the Minister announced the non-implementation just three months before it was due to come into effect. Bill C-280 was passed by the House of Commons last June, so the government has had months to prepare for the likely passage of the bill. In fact, it is known that the government has been taking measures to prepare for the implementation of the RAD. Delaying the implementation of RAD for a further 180 days could cost refugees' lives.

**c) Present what is at stake (5 minutes)**

- *Refugee lives are in the hands of a single person* - In 2002, the government went ahead with sections of the IRPA that reduce the number of board members hearing a claim from two to one member. This means that a single person decides the fate of a refugee claimant, even though a wrong decision may mean that a claimant is sent back to face persecution, torture and even death.
- *Any decision-making process will make mistakes* - As human beings, we are all bound to make mistakes from time to time, however hard we try. An effective system, which includes a refugee appeal, recognizes this and provides a mechanism to correct errors.
- *Cite some local examples* of the need to implement the RAD, or refer to the cases highlighted in the 'Refugee Appeal Backgrounder', available online at: www.ccrweb.ca/RADbackgrounder.pdf

d) Questions from your Senator

- Your Senator may have questions about the Refugee Appeal Division and its importance. Refer to the 'Refugee Appeal Division Backgrounder' for possible answers to Frequently Asked Questions, available online at: www.ccrweb.ca/RADbackgrounder.pdf
- If you are meeting with the Senator in person, give him/her the one-pager and backgrounder outlining the issue. Offer to send the Senator a copy of the one-pager and backgrounder by email, if preferred.

e) Solutions/Requests to your Senator (1 1/2 minutes)

- Ask for the Senator's support for Bill C-280, calling for the immediate implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division, and for its quick passage through Committee without amendment. *Try to leave the meeting with a straight answer from him or her.*

f) Thank You and Follow-up (1 minute)

- Thank the Senator for his/her time. Recap the commitments made and promise to follow up with their office.