

Why Advocacy?

Advocacy is key to social change. Governments and authority figures do not always implement policies that protect the interests of all members of society. Therefore, advocating for government attention to social injustices is an excellent way to hold governments to account on social issues.

As Canadians interested in the best policy measures for refugees, we must understand how integral we are to the process of social change. We can do a lot to realize improvements in the private sponsorship system we desire for refugees and sponsors. For instance, if we want an increase in the number of sponsorship applications we can submit, we must let the government know how important this is by organizing campaigns, writing letters, meeting with our elected representatives, and engaging social media tools to disseminate our message. Though these actions may seem inconsequential to real policy change, combined efforts from around the country will prove otherwise.

Why this Resource?

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) conducted a survey of Sponsorship Agreement Holders in Canada, to determine the policy challenges necessary to improve their sponsorship work. The results of this survey formed the basis of CPJ's new report, "[A Half Welcome: Delays, Limits, and Inequities in Canadian Refugee Sponsorship](#)." Four main challenges emerged from SAHs' responses. Of the SAHs we polled, about 97% raised concerns about how long it takes to process applications. What's more, 94% of SAHs expressed overall concern with the long processing times for non-Syrian cases, while 88% found current allocation limits to be troubling for private sponsorship today. Lastly, about 75% of SAHs are concerned with the travel loans refugees must repay upon resettlement in Canada.

These four issues constitute SAHs' major concerns in private sponsorship today. While it's great to know exactly what policy issues constitute serious challenges to private sponsorship, we cannot stop there. The report provides a solid start for continuous research on these issues. However, we must act on the information provided. For example, CPJ recommends that the government allocate additional resources to processing centres to expedite processing times. How do we advocate on this? What creative things can we do to get the government's attention and cause policy change? With this package, we've provided a few ways you can advocate on these four issues (and other issues specific to your cases). You can brainstorm on other innovative ways to get your message across.

Advocating for better private sponsorship policies requires tact and thoughtfulness. Although there is the tendency to consider advocacy as quite radical and forceful, government representatives would be more willing to listen to your position if it is not framed in an adversarial way. Therefore, as SAHs from our report suggest, it is best to organize your position and advocacy plan in a way that shows your desire to work with the government on effecting policy changes. Balance the need to communicate your message as uncompromisingly as you can with the need to ensure that it is thoughtful and paves the way to dialogue. We've given an example on how to do this in the sample letter in this package. Overall, our advocacy efforts must always place refugees' rights and safety at the fore. This will influence what strategies we use to advocate for better policies.