

What can *you* do to help a refugee?

Write to a local or national newspaper or other media.

They may not publish your letter, but they definitely read them. This influences what they are likely to publish in the future. Keep your letter short (150 words or less) and to the point. Its always a bit hard the first time, but it gets easier with practice!

National Post: letters@nationalpost.com For *how* to write a letter:

<http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=3eafdfc5-1af1-430b-8bb4-3b1dc3f8abc0>

Globe and Mail: letters@globeandmail.ca For *how* to write a letter:

<http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/v5/content/help/editorial-answers.html#submission>

CBC: http://www.cbc.ca/connects/help/programming_feedback

CTV: <http://www.ctv.ca/About/Corporate-Info/Contact-Us.aspx>

For other media: google the name of the organization and “contact” or “letters to the editor” or “comments” or “submissions”.

Contact your local MP or candidates

Ask them what their position is on refugees. Ask them what they suggest you can do. Offer your suggestions and point of view. They may not be very clear on these questions, but your contacting them causes them to think about the question. Politicians (and party volunteers) are human. Your interactions with them influences them. *They* also may not be clear on what to do. So any suggestions you make could be helpful to them. This site gives you some tips on how to approach an MP:

<https://thechaiyun.wordpress.com/2015/09/17/write-to-your-mp-or-candidates-on-changes-to-refugee-response/>

Consider joining a political party

Join whichever one you like. They welcome permanent residents, as well as citizens of Canada. Talking informally with people behind the scenes *does* influence them, especially if you are working with them. It is inexpensive (about \$10), and they will send you information about what they are doing, and how you can participate. They also do surveys of member's topics of interest from time to time, as well as conventions where they debate different topics. Adding your voice *does* make a difference.

Conservative: <http://www.conservative.ca>

Liberal: <https://www.liberal.ca>

Green Party: <https://www.greenparty.ca>

NDP: <http://www.ndp.ca/#>

Go and vote... and take a friend.

It *does* make a difference. Generally, vote where your heart leads you, but in swing ridings (where the race is very close), you might want to consult Leadnow's site <http://www.leadnow.ca> . This organization analyses the ridings, and makes suggestions on how to vote where the races are very close under the heading VoteTogether.ca . Leadnow is dedicated right now to defeating Steven Harper, so if you are a Conservative supporter, this site may not be useful to you.

Seek out organizations who help refugees and ask how you can help

The Canadian Council of Refugees (<http://ccrweb.ca>) lists member organizations that work with refugees. Look for one in your area, and contact them.

Go to a protest in support of refugees

This puts pressure on the government to accept more refugees, and to consider ways to help refugees overseas. This link gives news of events across Canada: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/day-action-syrian-refugees>
When going to a protest, consider taking a poster with a short message to express your ideas. Large pieces of coloured cardboard can be bought for a dollar or two at a dollar store. Take care to write in black marker in large letters so that your message is easily seen by passersby and newsmedia. Prepare what you might like to say to the media. They especially like personal stories that are connected with the larger issues. Feel free to express how you *feel* about an issue. They like sincere emotion.

Find out how to sponsor a refugee

You can read up on it on this government of Canada site:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/index.asp>

However, if you live in Québec, the rules are different (and easier). You can read about them here:

<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/immigrate-settle/refugees-other/index.html>

Find a accredited organization that can join you in sponsoring a refugee

Outside of Québec, contact one of the organizations listed on the government of Canada site:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/list-sponsors.asp> If you sponsor a refugee family with one of these organizations that are accredited by the government, the application tends to be processed much more quickly. Québec institutions do not need to be accredited. They do need to follow certain rules, though, which are explained on the Immigration Québec site.

Form groups of at least 5 (Québec can be as few as 2)

Professor Jamie Liew of the University of Ottawa is organizing people to form groups to sponsor refugees. If you are in Ottawa and you want to sponsor a refugee yourself, if you can support or organize others who can sponsor, or if you want to donate to help others to sponsor a refugee, you can contact her at: jcyliew@gmail.com and indicate to her what you would like to do. She can also suggest to you different ideas of how you can help. As she has a bank account set up specifically for donations to help sponsor refugees, you can also help by donating to this account. Contact her for details.

If you attend a religious institution, contact it.

Ask what they are doing to help refugees. It is best to talk to *administrators*, as these are the people generally in charge of decision-making, especially where money is concerned. Religious leaders often have a lot less power than we might think they do, and are often very busy.

If you are a member of a union or a community organization, contact it.

Ask them what they are doing to help refugees. They may not have any clear answers just yet, but if you ask them, this can get them thinking and looking for answers.

If you live in Québec

The Québec government has control of it's own immigration policy, and the current premier of Québec is *very* motivated to help refugees. Indeed, he is personally getting involved in sponsoring a refugee family. You can contact Astrid Le Jeune (Asiya) at asietlejeune@gmail.com . She will try to connect you with other people and organizations in the Gatineau area who could work with you.

Remember: All efforts, no matter how small-seeming, make a difference.

A drop of water does not seem very powerful, but when *many* drops fall together, floods occur. If we all do our little part, together, we *can* make *big* differences! And even if we can't change *the* world, we *can* change *a* world. And for *that* person... it means everything.