

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



What is the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA)?

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) is the advocacy agent of the Jewish Federations of Canada. CIJA is a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of Jewish life in Canada by advancing the public policy interests of Canada's vital and varied Jewish community. By building and nurturing relationships with target audiences in government, media, academia, and interfaith and ethnic communities, CIJA ensures greater understanding of the issues that impact the Jewish community. It connects the power of a strong, national network to regional efforts in every Canadian province and to international efforts worldwide. At the forefront of issues that unite the Jewish community, CIJA advocates for: freedom, human rights, social justice, and support for the People and the Land of Israel. Learn more about CIJA at cija.ca.

Who works at CIJA?

CIJA's team reflects a diversity of personal and professional backgrounds. Many have significant experience in various key sectors, including government, media, academia, public opinion research, and both corporate and non-profit organizations. Staff members come from Jewish communities across the country and represent a broad spectrum of political orientation and Jewish religious practice. CIJA also benefits from the knowledge and diverse backgrounds of its non-Jewish staff members. A list of staff and their biographies may be read [here](#).

Who heads CIJA?

CIJA's lay leadership is led by David Cape, Chair of CIJA's Board of Directors. His biography may be read [here](#). He is assisted by an ad hoc Executive Committee, comprising the Immediate Past Chair, two Vice Chairs and the Treasurer. CIJA's list of Board members, with biographies, may be read [here](#).

CIJA's professional team is headed by Chief Executive Officer Shimon Koffler Fogel. His biography may be read [here](#).

How are CIJA Board members selected?

CIJA's National Board includes 26 members drawn from communities coast to coast. Nominations to the Board are guided by an independent and thorough process whereby the nominations committee assesses the background, specific skills, experience, performance and other relevant qualifications of prospective Directors and submits a list of candidates for consideration. The slate of candidates is then carefully considered by the CIJA members, which includes representatives of all federated communities (Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Ottawa, Victoria, Winnipeg, London, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Windsor), non-federated communities (Regina, Saskatoon, Kingston, Atlantic Jewish Council), and Jewish Federations of Canada-UJA. The members vote on the candidates during CIJA's annual general membership meeting. The Directors then elect the Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer.

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What does CIJA do?

CIJA undertakes a range of targeted advocacy initiatives and educational activities designed to advance broader, long-term strategic objectives.

These include:

- **Government Relations.** CIJA works closely with decision-makers at federal, provincial, and municipal levels; provides expert resources and advice; and educates regarding particular policy options.
- **Outreach to Multicultural and Faith Communities.** CIJA builds alliances on issues of common cause, provides platforms to discuss policy solutions, and generates support for Jewish community concerns among mainstream Canadians.
- **Media Relations.** CIJA monitors media coverage, contributes commentary to advance our community's interests and provides journalists with information and expert resources from CIJA and beyond.
- **Partnering with Local Jewish Communities.** CIJA provides resources and direct support to its Local Partners across Canada (Federations and other Jewish communal bodies), to assist with local advocacy challenges and to support their community engagement initiatives.
- **Empowering Campus Activists.** CIJA liaises with academics and university administrations on matters affecting the Jewish community on campus and provides resources, training, and direct support for Hillels and other Jewish student groups to promote an understanding of Israel and Jewish issues on campuses across Canada.
- **Missions to Israel.** CIJA hosts influencers in a range of sectors for intensive fact-finding missions to Israel – enabling Canadians in key positions to understand firsthand the similarities Canadians share with Israelis and the challenges facing the Jewish state.

What makes CIJA different from other Jewish organizations?

CIJA is the only registered lobby for the Jewish community. It is the sole advocacy agent of Canada's Jewish Federations and it focuses much of its work on communications with the non-Jewish community. Its approach to advocacy is strategic and is based on research, polling, and analysis. It is the only organization to bring – literally – hundreds of Canadian influencers and decision-makers to Israel on educational missions every year.

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How do I contribute to CIJA?

Although funded by Canada's Jewish Federations, CIJA also raises funds for specific activities through the year. Donations go to Jewish Federations Canada – UIA and directed for CIJA's use. Tax receipts are provided by JFC-UIA. Donations may be made [online](#) by credit card or by cheque (made out to Jewish Federations Canada – UIA, with an indication that the donation is for CIJA) and sent by mail to Catherine Morrow, CIJA, 1075 Bay Street, Suite 525, Toronto ON M5S 2B1.

How can I get involved in CIJA's work?

There are various ways you can get involved with CIJA:

- [Learn more](#). To learn about the issues and policies we are involved in, "like" us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates (at the bottom of [this](#) page, select "join our mailing list").
- [Speak up](#). Take our survey to let us know what you think about our performance and your priorities. If you are particularly passionate about the issues and enjoy writing, consider joining [The Exchange](#) – CIJA's grassroots blog forum for engaging Canadians on a range of topics.
- [Take action](#). If you want to get involved in planning and implementing advocacy initiatives, consider volunteering with CIJA's Local Partner Council (LPC) in your community. Contact us at info@cija.ca and we will connect you with your nearest LPC.

How does CIJA report progress on its various advocacy files?

CIJA stays in touch with Canada's organized Jewish community through its Board, Local Partners, and Local Partner Council, and with the broader community through CIJA's online channels (mentioned above) and mainstream media.

In addition, CIJA issues a biennial Impact Report, which reviews the files, legislation, and policy issues on which CIJA has been engaged in the past two years – and invites members of the community to evaluate our progress. To read the 2012-13 [Impact Report](#).

What issues fall within CIJA's mandate?

CIJA's activities – including leadership development, education, and research and analysis – span a number of policy areas. Examples include: combating antisemitism, strengthening the Canada-Israel relationship, advancing human rights, advocating on behalf of society's most vulnerable, and ensuring that multiculturalism enhances rather than undermines Canadian social unity. These and other priorities are determined by the essential criteria of advancing the quality of Jewish life in Canada and abroad and contributing to the well-being of Canadians in keeping with Canada's core democratic values. We consider these two benchmarks to be not merely compatible but complementary.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



How is CIJA funded?

As the advocacy arm of the Jewish Federations of Canada, CIJA's core funding comes from the Federations through Jewish Federations of Canada – UIA (JFC – UIA). Collectively, this organization reflects the support of approximately 100,000 Federation-affiliated donors in Jewish communities across the country. Remaining funds are raised from private donors in Canada to support specific programs.

What is CIJA's Budgeting Process?

CIJA's Members and Board review and approve recommended programs (and budgets to support those programs) developed by professional staff in response to goals established by Jewish Federations of Canada – UIA. The budget, constituting the recommended program, is then submitted to JFC – UIA for review and approval.

CIJA is a non-profit organization that receives no funding from the Government of Canada or the State of Israel. CIJA is 100% funded by Canadians and accountable to Canadians.

On what basis does CIJA claim to represent the Jewish community?

As the Jewish and pro-Israel community is not monolithic, no one organization can claim to serve as the sole representative of that constituency. However, CIJA is the most democratic and representative Jewish organization in Canada, with its structure including various local and national bodies that enable the Jewish community to have a direct role in determining CIJA's positions, priorities, and initiatives.

Guided by an independent nominations process and comprising 26 members, CIJA's Board is drawn from communities coast to coast and includes former parliamentarians affiliated with all three major political parties. Consistent with CIJA's mandate of reaching out to all Canadians, CIJA benefits from the experience and insight of non-Jewish Board members who share the Jewish community's concerns and public policy interests. The Board meets in person three times per year and by conference call every month and on an as-needed basis. The Board approves strategic goals and provides advice and support for programming pursuant to those goals.

What Are Local Partners?

CIJA's Local Partners consist of Jewish Federations as well as non-Federated communities (such as the Atlantic Jewish Council). The Local Partners serve as CIJA's shareholders – both literally and figuratively. CIJA works closely with Local Partners in helping to manage advocacy challenges affecting local Jewish communities by providing national strategic advice, subject matter expertise, and resources.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



What Are LPCs?

While core messages and initiatives are generally consistent with a national advocacy strategy, every community is unique. There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to local implementation. Therefore, joint Federation-CIJA bodies of community volunteers known as Local Partner Councils have been established across the country to enable local grassroots individuals or groups, with the support and resources of the Federation and CIJA, to take the lead in addressing local challenges. As well, LPCs are responsible for implementing national initiatives at the local level.

Of special importance is the expectation that CIJA will benefit not only from directing advocacy activity but also from the input by the LPC in the policy development process.

What is the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus?

The Canadian Rabbinic Caucus (CRC) provides CIJA with guidance and input on behalf of synagogues across Canada and across the spectrum of Jewish religious practice. The CRC meets regularly by conference call and serves as a spokesperson on public policy matters affecting Jewish religious life and freedom of religion in Canada. Membership in the CRC is open to rabbis from any denomination of Judaism. The CRC is led by an 18-member executive committee (six Reform, six Conservative, and six Orthodox) which, in turn, elects Co-Chairs. The CRC is currently co-chaired by Rabbi Reuben Poupko of Montreal (Orthodox), Rabbi Jonathan Infeld of Vancouver (Conservative), and Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl of Toronto (Conservative). The CRC's Vice Chair is Debra Landsberg of Toronto (Reform).

Where is CIJA located?

CIJA has offices and staff in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Jerusalem.

How are decisions made at CIJA?

CIJA's staff, Board, Local Partners, and JFC – UIA all have a direct role in determining CIJA's long-term, strategic goals.

CIJA's professional staff have the lead in determining how these goals are achieved, including in the design of programs, advocacy initiatives, and near-term objectives – which are all subject to review and approval by CIJA's Board.

Advocacy challenges often have an impact on specific local Jewish communities. In such cases, CIJA works closely with Local Partners in the affected community to provide strategic advice and resources that enable the Local Partner (Federation) or the Local Partner Council (volunteers) to take the lead in addressing the issue.

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Does CIJA work with other Jewish and pro-Israel advocacy organizations?

Yes. CIJA works closely with various Jewish community organizations, typically on a project-by-project basis.

Is there room within CIJA for people who disagree with CIJA's policies?

Yes. CIJA aims to enhance Jewish unity across Canada but not uniformity of viewpoints, a goal premised on the belief that, when combined with a broad sense of solidarity, a healthy diversity of opinion among Jewish Canadians is a source of community strength and vitality.

With very few exceptions, CIJA strives to be inclusive of a wide range of viewpoints. As a matter of policy, CIJA does not provide a platform for the promotion of boycott-divestment-sanctions measures against Israel.

What is CIJA's role outside Canada?

CIJA serves as the Canadian constituent member of the [World Jewish Congress \(WJC\)](#). In this capacity, CIJA regularly leads delegations of Jewish Canadian lay leaders, activists, and students to participate in the WJC's plenary sessions and offer a Canadian perspective on global trends and advocacy solutions to key issues.

CIJA also serves as a member of the Jewish Federations of North America's Israel Action Network as well as the Global Coalition for Israel. CIJA has worked with a range of Jewish community organizations around the world, among others: the [American Jewish Committee \(AJC\)](#), the [America-Israel Public Affairs Committee \(AIPAC\)](#), [NGO Monitor](#), the [Institute for National Security Studies \(INSS\)](#), and the [Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies](#).

CIJA has recently established a formal strategic partnership with the [Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations](#). It is the only organization outside of the United States to be formally affiliated with the Conference of Presidents.

CIJA also serves as the Canadian representative organization to the Material Claims Conference, with two permanent directors serving on the Claims Conference Board.

CIJA serves as an active member of the Advisory Council of the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IRHA\)](#), a body of experts and governments from 31 countries dedicated to preserving the memory and lessons of the Shoah.

CIJA maintains an office in Jerusalem for the purpose of conducting on-the-ground missions work and liaising directly with Israeli government officials, including representatives from across party lines in the Knesset. Through its Jerusalem office, professional leadership, and its Board, CIJA engages directly with key interlocutors in the region. When requested of CIJA, this engagement has included meeting with Palestinian and Jordanian officials as well as other actors in the region – always with the consent and endorsement of the governments of both Canada and Israel.