

# 1 What? Me? An advocate?

## Have you ever...

- Stood up for someone who was bullied or harassed?
- Pushed the medical system to get treatment for a sick friend or relative?
- Participated in a public protest against something you felt was harming people?
- Signed a petition on an issue of concern?

## Then you are an advocate!

Perhaps you have not thought about yourself as an advocate before. No doubt you have been concerned about people whose lives have been harmed by poverty, crime, war or injustice. No doubt you have donated money to help address specific needs. Perhaps you have volunteered in a thrift shop or a community project. These are important ways of addressing human need.

This resource is intended to encourage you to address some of the deeper causes of human suffering by becoming an advocate.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has engaged in formal advocacy to the federal government for over forty years. This work has involved making direct appeals to government for policies that would, for example, increase aid to disaster victims, welcome and resettle refugees, apply restorative justice principles to crime, and seek nonviolent solutions to armed conflict.

Much of this work has involved MCC workers speaking to elected officials or civil servants through face to face meetings, letters or briefs, and written submissions to parliamentary committees.

Increasingly, however, we are learning about the power and influence of ordinary individuals and communities in the work of advocacy. Indeed, most members of Parliament today are much more eager to hear from their constituents on particular issues than they are from organizations like MCC.

Ordinary people like you can help build peace, justice and human dignity through advocacy. **Join us!**

This resource invites you to become an advocate, and to practice advocacy in the same way that you donate to a cause, volunteer in your community or engage in direct service.



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Speak out for those  
who cannot speak  
for themselves, for  
the rights of all those  
who are destitute.

*Proverbs 31:8*

## story

**ANNA-MARIE JANZEN** is a 20-something activist. She had her political awakening when, as a young child, she saw the movie *Mary Poppins* and was introduced to her foremothers, the suffragettes. As a young woman, she could hardly wait to cast her own vote in an election. She sees voting as a privilege, honour and a responsibility. But Anna-Marie's activism goes way beyond voting. She regularly writes to her member of Parliament about issues important to her, such as laws on criminal justice, the arms trade, climate change mitigation and international aid. She also tries to “walk the talk” by actively challenging herself and others to live justly and sustainably. For example, she wears the same dress for a month each October as a way of demonstrating her resistance to the consumer fashion industry. Anna-Marie says, “Ours may not be a perfect political system, but it's a system we can use to make our world a better place.”

Learn about current MCC advocacy campaigns at  
[mccottawa.ca](http://mccottawa.ca)