

Development and Peace presses for federal funding to stop tide of refugees

After two years of hammering away at politicians on peace, security and refugees, Canada's Catholic development agency is claiming a few small victories.

A [Development and Peace e-petition](#) on the Parliament of Canada website garnered more than 1,000 signatures in a little over a month. It called for the federal government to fund the kind of development projects that will prevent people from becoming refugees.

"People don't actually want to leave their countries, but they are forced to," said [Development and Peace](#) spokesperson Kelly Di Domenico. "The idea is that if there is more investment in creating conditions where people don't actually have to flee then they won't."



Kelly Di Domenico

The official e-petition was presented in Parliament as soon as it hit 500 signatures by retiring Quebec NDP MP H el ene Laverdi ere on June 12.

"This may be the last time I rise in the House. There is no greater honour for me than to take this final opportunity to table this petition," Laverdi ere said.

“Canadians are asking us to do more by supporting grassroots organizations that promote peace, democracy and human rights and investing more in diplomatic and peaceful solutions to armed conflicts.”

The official, parliamentary e-petition was an add-on to [an existing online petition](#) that has garnered over 7,600 signatures. Both petitions demand the government make humanitarian assistance available to all refugees, support grassroots organizations promoting peace, democracy and human rights and invest more in diplomatic solutions to armed conflicts.

At the same time, Development and Peace is claiming a political victory in persuading Ottawa to finally appoint an Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security.

“(Ambassador Jacqueline) O’Neill’s appointment is a victory for Development and Peace’s 2017-2018 campaign, ‘May Peace Be With Her,’ ” said a Development and Peace [press release](#).

Academic research backing up the “May Peace Be With Her” campaign shows peace processes are more successful and peace is longer lasting when women are included in peace negotiations.

“It’s important that the message be shared,” said Di Domenico.

The idea for the ambassadorship was originally proposed in a parliamentary motion by Toronto Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj, but it also followed on 70,000 postcards sent into Ottawa by Development and Peace supporters.

Development and Peace delegations have met with 63 Members of Parliament promoting the idea that focussed international development spending can help to address the global refugee crisis in which 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from their homes.

“(We are) asking for an increase in development aid, but also asking the government to be more pro-active in putting forward peaceful solutions and supporting peace processes,” said Di Domenico.

“We know that if people are able to work, if they have affordable shelter, then they will be less likely to leave their communities. But also, war and conflict are a large factor in why people flee. So another objective of the petition is to ask the government to be more active in participating and promoting peace processes.”