



REFORM JEWISH COMMUNITY
OF CANADA

Partner of the Union for Reform Judaism

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN CANADA

**RJCC'S 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN: 2020-2024
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - NOVEMBER 13, 2019**

INTRODUCTION

Reform Judaism is practiced by liberal Jews who observe tradition, with the freedom to choose how to live ethical, uplifting Jewish lives while guided by three main tenets: God, Torah and Israel. The Reform Jewish Community of Canada (RJCC) is a not-for profit, charitable organization whose purpose is to strengthen and grow the Reform Movement of Canada by supporting and providing leadership to its key Canadian stakeholders- Reform congregations, its partner organization URJ Camp George and Reform affiliates. The RJCC is strongly aligned with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), which represents over 800 Reform congregations in North America. The two organizations, their member congregations, partners and affiliates collectively represent the North American Reform Movement.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In April 2019, the RJCC (formerly Canadian Council of Reform Judaism) undertook to develop a strategic plan to set RJCC's priorities for strengthening and growing the Reform Movement in Canada over the next 5 years. The methodology included an extensive engagement process.

113 interviews with congregations,
URJ Camp George, Canadian affiliates
and URJ staff

9 focused conversations with more
than 100 stakeholders representing
interest groups

Extensive review to ensure alignment
with URJ 2020 priorities and actions

Input from the RJCC Board,
Advisory Group and URJ Canada
Steering Committee

Analysis of the 2018 Survey of
Jews in Canada

Support and guidance from
Michael Miloff, President,
Michael Miloff & Associates

CANADIAN CONGREGATIONS, PARTNER AND AFFILIATES

CANADIAN CONGREGATIONS

British Columbia

Temple Sholom, Vancouver

Kolot Mayim Reform Temple, Victoria

Alberta

Temple B'nai Tikvah, Calgary

Temple Beth Ora Congregation, Edmonton

Manitoba

Temple Shalom, Winnipeg

Ontario

B'nai Shalom V'Tikvah, Ajax

Am Shalom Congregation, Barrie

Har Tikvah Congregation, Brampton

Temple Anshe Sholom, Hamilton

Congregation Iyr Ha-Melech, Kingston

Temple Israel, London

Solel Congregation, Mississauga

Or Hadash Synagogue, Newmarket

Shaarei-Beth El Congregation, Oakville

Temple Israel, Ottawa

Temple Kol Ami, Thornhill

Temple Har Zion, Thornhill

City Shul, Toronto

Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto

Beth Chaverim at Baycrest Terrace, Toronto

Temple Sinai, Toronto

Temple Emanu-El, Toronto

Temple Shalom, Waterloo

Congregation Beth El, Windsor

Quebec

Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom, Montreal

PARTNER

URJ Camp George

AFFILIATES

American Conference of Cantors (ACC)

ARZENU, International Federation of Reform and Progressive

Religious Zionists Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE)

Canadian Association of Reform Zionists (ARZA Canada)

Reform Jewish Community of Canada (RJCC)

Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)

Early Childhood Educators of Reform Judaism (ECE-RJ)

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR)

Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC)

Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism (IMPJ)

The Leo Baeck Day School

National Association for Temple Administration (NATA)

North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY)

Reform Mikvah of Greater Toronto

Reform Mohalim of Greater Toronto

Reform Rabbis of Greater Toronto (RRGT)

Reform Rabbis of Canada (RROC)

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC)

Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)

Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ)

Canadian Friends of World Union of Progressive Judaism (CF-WUPJ)



KEY FINDINGS

The data showed that Reform leaders across Canada pride themselves on their warm, caring, friendly, inclusive communities that are open to interfaith families, the LGBTQ community, visible minorities and others. Reform congregations provide egalitarian worship services, spiritually uplifting music, Torah study and high-quality, accessible programs focused on Tikkun Olam, Jewish life and Israel. Overall, synagogues, Camp George and Reform-affiliated organizations are vital and dynamic; at the same time, much work is required to reach the unaffiliated in order to further grow the Movement.

Indeed, challenges with maintaining synagogue membership, financial and volunteer resources and engagement with the next generation of Jews are common concerns across the country. Membership challenges cross the lifespan. There are fewer teens engaged, millennials are often reluctant to join, adults in their 40s with families are economically pressed and many in their 50s, once their children become Bar or Bat Mitzvah or leave home, don't find synagogue life sufficiently engaging to retain affiliation.

Welcoming interfaith families is a priority among most congregations, with various approaches taken across Canada.

A key theme is the apparent lack of understanding and appreciation of the “Reform brand,” both within the Movement but especially with those Jews outside it. There are also differing views expressed regarding support for Israel, though affiliated Reform Jews are generally pro-Zionist. While many take pride in the strength of the Reform Movement’s commitment to social justice, it is not a universal source of attraction to Reform Judaism; some concerns were expressed that it not become a substitute for Jewish life in its entirety.

Many of the smaller congregations and affiliates feel isolated. Large congregations are perceived as being more self-sufficient, with smaller ones feeling the larger ones could be more collaborative within and outside their regions. At the same time, larger congregations feel significant financial pressures. Affiliate organizations and URJ Camp George can and should work more collaboratively with congregations; there is potential for even greater joint work.

MISSION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Reflecting the research and consultations, the mission of the RJCC is as follows:

TO STRENGTHEN AND GROW THE CANADIAN JEWISH REFORM MOVEMENT.

The RJCC strategic plan is organized around three strategic objectives:



RJCC'S KEY ROLES

In ensuring the development, implementation and ongoing adaptation of Canadian Reform Movement strategic priorities, RJCC will perform the following roles.

- Convene and connect, creating opportunities to bring stakeholders together to network
- Facilitate access to internal and external resources and expertise
- Represent the Canadian Reform Movement on national and international issues to external stakeholders
- Fundraise for national Canadian Reform Movement initiatives including securing special project donations
- Steward the necessary legal, governance, financial and organizational activities required to operate the RJCC
- Administer the Canadian Reform Pension Plan
- Carry out communications, research, consultation, documentation and administration to support congregations, URJ Camp George and reform affiliates

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Six strategic initiatives, summarized in the following chart, support one or more of the three strategic objectives.



INITIATIVE 1: FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A CANADIAN REFORM BRAND

- Establish a Branding and Marketing Committee to develop a Canadian Reform value proposition and brand
- Leverage URJ expertise and resources
- Deploy external consulting expertise
- Develop brand positioning and marketing program
- Implement branding and marketing program to raise awareness of the Reform Movement



INITIATIVE 2: SUPPORT CONGREGATIONS TO BE MORE SUSTAINABLE AND EFFECTIVE AND PROVIDE SIMILAR ASSISTANCE TO URJ CAMP GEORGE AND AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

- Maintain ongoing connections with congregations, URJ Camp George and affiliates
- Support small congregations with services and capacity building
- Provide learning opportunities for volunteer leadership
- Support and promote URJ Camp George
- Support affiliate organizations
- Leverage URJ resources



INITIATIVE 3: STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION ACROSS REFORM ORGANIZATIONS

- Identify and support opportunities for collaboration across congregations, URJ Camp George and affiliates
- Establish a small grant program to encourage collaboration
- Promote collaboration with and among affiliates
- Facilitate development of Canadian content for and networking at Biennial
- Develop and support communities of practice
- Work with ARZA Canada to determine the feasibility of and approach to organizing a Canadian Reform Movement mission to Israel within the next 5 years
- Assist Reform organizations to promote the use of WUPJ's travel app
- Facilitate the exploration, and, if feasible, the provision of shared services
- Facilitate access to Reform clergy, educational and musical experiences



INITIATIVE 4: SUPPORT A NATIONAL TIKKUN OLAM STRATEGY WITH BOTH NATIONAL AND LOCAL COMPONENTS

- Develop a Steering Group and a National Tikkun Olam Committee
- Develop and support a national Tikkun Olam strategy that will include local, regional and national initiatives
- Develop resources that will support small congregations to implement the strategy
- Work with rabbis and other leaders interested in advocacy
- Represent the Reform Movement in community-wide initiatives
- Assess, leverage and customize a Canadian version of the RAC's Brit Olam, if feasible
- Determine the feasibility of developing a RAC Canada



INITIATIVE 5: PROMOTE TEEN AND MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT IN CONGREGATIONS, PARTNERS AND AFFILIATES

- Establish a Youth Engagement Committee for teens (focus on ages 12-17)
- Promote synergies with URJ Camp George
- Explore piloting an initiative with Hillel Ontario to engage youth at selected campuses (focus on ages 18-22)
- Support development of an integrated program to assist congregations design and implement their millennial engagement activities (focus on ages 23-29)
- Leverage, customize and promote URJ resources



INITIATIVE 6: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT FUNDRAISING FOR THE CANADIAN REFORM MOVEMENT

- Establish a Fundraising Committee and/or informal advisers
- Develop and implement fundraising strategy
- Provide modest fundraising support to small congregations' fundraising efforts