

## Meeting Your Member of Parliament

### Before the meeting:

- **Locate your MP by either:**
  - Going online to <http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/index.asp?Language=E>. Go to the "Current Parliamentarians" section and type in your postal code for the name, address and phone number of your Member of Parliament.
  - Phoning 1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)  
The operator will provide you with the name, address and phone number of your Member of Parliament.
- **Phone the riding office of your Member of Parliament.**  
Ask to speak with his or her scheduling assistant. Identify yourself as a constituent, briefly describe what you would like to cover during the meeting and outline your availability. Try to be flexible in setting up a meeting time. MPs have a lot of demands for their time.
- **Brief yourself.**  
Be prepared for the meeting by informing yourself of counter-arguments to your position and questions that may arise as a result of the conversation. Be prepared to make requests of your MP based on the direction of the conversation. Prepare any documentation you may wish to leave with the MP or his or her staff.

### Meeting etiquette:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the meeting.
- If the meeting is in Ottawa you will be required to go through security and receive a visitor's pass.
- Turn off your cell phone or blackberry.
- Assign a time-watcher. **Stick to the schedule.** Generally a meeting with an MP should not last longer than 30-45 minutes. Never go beyond an hour unless you are specifically asked to stay.
- Keep the meeting tone positive: Be non-political and non-confrontational.
- Tell a story to highlight your point and make the case compelling. Emphasize how the issue affects your future.
- Be mindful of your objective: You want to know where your MP stands on the issue.
  - If he/she is non-committal, use persuasive arguments.
  - **If he/she is supportive, ask if he/she will raise the issue with the appropriate minister and caucus colleagues. Ask if he/she will follow-up with you regarding any conversations he or she has with the Minister on this subject. If the MP is not a Conservative, ask if he or she will raise the issue with MPs in his/her Party and follow up with you.**
  - If he or she holds contrary views, respectfully point out the counter-arguments. Thank contacts for the meeting. Volunteer to provide additional information. Ask if he/she have any questions or comments for you.

### Meeting follow-up:

Send a follow-up letter thanking the official for meeting. In it, restate your key points.

## Phoning your Member of Parliament

Phone calls are a very effective way to get your MP's attention. Even if you are not able to speak directly with your MP, his or her constituency assistant is there to keep track of hot issues in the riding. The more telephone calls that come into your MP's office on any given issue, the more likely it is that your MP will take notice.

### Before the call:

- **Locate your MP by either:**
  - Going online at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/index.asp?Language=E>. Go to the "Current Parliamentarians" section and type in your postal code for the name, address and phone number of your Member of Parliament.
  - Phoning 1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)  
The operator will provide you with the name, address and phone number of your Member of Parliament.

### Brief yourself.

Be prepared for the phone call by informing yourself of counter-arguments to your position and questions that may arise as a result of the conversation. Be prepared to make requests of your MP based on the direction of the conversation.

### During the call:

- **Keep the tone positive.** Be non-political and non-confrontational. Be genuine.
- Tell a story to tell your story to highlight your point and make the case compelling.
- Be mindful of your objective: You want to know where the MP stands on the issue.
  - If he/she is non-committal, use persuasive arguments.
  - **If he/she is supportive, ask if he/she will raise the issue with the appropriate minister and caucus colleagues. Ask if he/she will follow-up with you regarding any conversations he/she has with the Minister on this subject. If the MP is not a Conservative, ask if he or she will raise the issue with MPs in his/her Party and follow up with you.**
  - If he or she holds contrary views, respectfully point out the counter-arguments, why it matters to you and factual information to support your case.

### After the call:

- **Write a letter.** You may wish to write a follow-up letter after your call. In it, restate your key messages. A sample letter is included in this kit to get you started. You may also wish to refer to our "Writing Letters" section.

## **Example of a meeting follow up letter**

NOTE: This letter should be tailored to reflect the outcome of the MP meeting

Dear (MP's Name):

Thank you for taking the time to meet me to talk about *(subject of issue)*.

As we discussed, *(some key points and highlights here)*

I know that the government has said it will *(policy/position statement)*.  
I would like to ensure the government knows *(A, B, C)*

*[Write a couple of sentences here to summarize what you would like to see happen and why].*

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I appreciated having the opportunity to share my perspective on *(subject of issue)*.

Sincerely,

## Writing letters

Letters can be an extremely effective way of getting your point across. Newspapers and politicians alike are impressed and take notice of someone who has taken the time to write a personal and well-written letter on a timely issue.

What should be included in the letter?

- Clearly communicate where you stand on the issue
- State the key points
- If you feel comfortable, make the letter personal – talk about why you care about the issue.

Letters to the editor are most likely to be printed when they are timely. If you are writing in reply to something you have read in the paper, be sure to submit your response within a day or two of the report, otherwise it will lose its impact.

Letters to the editor may also:

- Clarify or rebut misinformation
- Reply to a news story, editorial or another reader's letter to the editor
- Keep the issue front and centre in readers' minds. A well-written letter may also spur other readers to action.