

Driven to Action

A CITIZEN'S TOOLKIT

BE AN EFFECTIVE LOBBYIST

Your best approach is to think of politicians as individuals with a vote, not a City Council or Provincial Party. Remember politicians are elected, and therefore are influenced by the people that decide their political future – voters and campaign donors. By taking this view, you will realize two important things: (1) you can win your issue by getting support from one politician at a time, and (2) your list of allies should include people that can influence particular politicians.

Build support for change – one vote at a time.

Assemble a Lobby Team

Ideally, establish a team of three people to lobby on behalf of the group and the campaign. Consistency will help establish relationships with politicians. Politicians should be able to put a face to your campaign and have a person they know to contact, in case they have questions. This team should conduct themselves like professional lobbyists – treat politicians with respect, earn their trust and respect, have them spend time with you, take your calls and ultimately support your campaign.

Periodically substitute one member of your team with a supporter that may have more influence with a particular politician.

Get to Know the Decision-makers

You and your supporters will also need to lobby individual politicians to get them onside. The more you know about that person and their voting record the easier it will be for you to speak with them and influence their vote.

do your research

- Log-on to politicians' websites and find out what they're concerned about. Find out how they voted on other issues.
- Attach a name to a face, memorize what wards/ridings they represent and how long they have been in politics. What did they do before they became a politician?
- Find allies in their wards/riding: contact the local ratepayers and residents associations since they usually have strong ties to their representatives.

Meet with the Decision-makers

Scheduling formal meetings with politicians will help you establish a relationship, inform them of your concerns and find out where they stand. Make a list of who you want to go see and start calling their offices.

Before you go, put together a briefing note on your issue. Briefing notes are short, clear statements of what you want and why it matters. A good briefing note will help busy politicians understand the issue and listen to you. Otherwise you will be forgotten or ignored.

sample briefing note

Title:	Proposed housing development on Richmond Road, Ward 12
Recommendation:	City Council should oppose the development and redirect the homes into an existing area of the City that could use re-investment.
Background:	The new development of 5000 homes will destroy an environmentally-significant area, necessitate a road expansion at the expense of the City, and contribute to air pollution. These homes can be accommodated elsewhere in the City.
Contact info:	List your group, one contact name and their phone number

Lobbying at City Hall

If your campaign has taken you to City Hall, you are in luck – it is easier to access decision-makers at this level. Schedule meetings with all the Councillors.

You can also lobby Councillors by committee. Issues are voted on twice at City Hall, first in committee and then at council. Committees are governed by a smaller set of Councillors and deal with specific issues – roads, transit, economic growth, planning, water, parks. Which committee(s) deals with your issue? Look at the monthly schedule of meetings and track your issue. Many meeting agendas are available online.

Find out when residents can formally address Councillors – at committee, council or both. Sign up to make a deputation to committee and present the contents of your briefing note. Hand out your briefing note to Councillors on the committee. They may use your recommendation to make a motion.

Lobbying Provincial Politicians

If your campaign takes you to the provincial legislature, you will need to form a relationship with key Ministers and their policy staff. Recommendations are made by Cabinet (a meeting of all the Ministers), then voted on in the legislature.

Call the Minister in charge of your issue:

Transportation, Environment, Municipal Affairs. Specify that you want to meet with the Minister. Likely, senior policy staff members will also attend. If the Minister won't support your issue you may need to resort to other tactics.

Opposition parties will have members who are “critics” for each issue. Also schedule a meeting with them and their staff. If this party is supportive ask them what they will do to move your issue forward. Encourage them to go public

meeting tips

- prepare a briefing note before the meeting
- lobby in a team, preferably include someone with influence
- review what you want to talk about beforehand and stay on message
- divide up the presentation so you cover everything
- be polite, clear, and brief
- answer their questions, unless they are not on topic
- don't leave the meeting without asking where they stand on your issue
- if supportive, ask them if they will take a public position on the issue
- get them to agree to do something for you
- ask them if they know others that support your issue
- tell them you will stay in touch
- leave information for them to review
- don't get angry in the meeting, you will not be asked back
- thank them for their time, maybe even send a letter

with their support by coming out to one of your community meetings and/or talking to the media. They may offer to push through a Private Members Bill on your behalf. Ask them what that is and its usefulness.

Double Your Influence

There are potential allies in your community that may already hold a lot of influence with certain politicians. Staff within provincial ministries and city departments can also be on your side and extremely effective at helping you move your issue forward.

other avenues to decision-makers

- **PROVINCIALY:** ministry assistants, opposition party critics, departmental staff
- **RESIDENCE & TENANT ASSOCIATIONS, AND COMMUNITY HOUSING ADVOCATES:** usually have strong relationships with their City Councillor
- **TRANSIT AUTHORITY STAFF:** make sure they are onside. Ask them to deliver a Ridership Growth Strategy.
- **MUNICIPAL PLANNERS:** ultimately make recommendations to Council. Most are familiar with ADSs and the economic damage of sprawl
- **EMERGENCY SERVICES STAFF:** their expenses increase with sprawl
- **CIVIC LEADERS:** former Mayors or Cabinet Ministers, local Chair of The United Way
- **PROFESSIONALS IN THE COMMUNITY:** private planners, architects, realtors, medical doctors

ORGANIZING TIPS

Decision-makers need a reason to support your campaign. Use the best tools for your campaign. Brainstorm new actions.

Go see the investors.	Banks and insurance companies finance development projects. Inform them of the damage of sprawl. Encourage them to be champions of your community.
Expose profits.	Some developers and retailers are making huge profits from sprawl. Compare this with how costly sprawl is to your community.
Publicize the environmental damage.	Make a flyer on the air, water and land pollution impacts. If you can't get local statistics, use examples from other communities. Check out www.smartgrowth.bc.ca
Publish election contributions.	Who politicians received donations from during their election campaigns is in the public record. See if you find anything interesting.
Start a letter writing campaign.	Write a sample letter and hand it out. Use email! Target the builder or politicians. Make sure you request a written response.
Publish your survey results.	Tally and release the results of the survey right before a key vote or to bring attention to your campaign.
Release a report.	Calculate the costs of sprawl and release them in a timely report.
Release voting records.	City Council can record how each Councillor votes on an issue. Make sure you get that information and release it to the press.

be present when decisions are made

React when good or bad planning decisions are made.

The provincial government may decide on your issue by sending you a letter; holding a vote in the legislature or making a press announcement. Be prepared to react to this decision.

- fax the rejection letter to the press
- hold a press conference on the day of the vote or announcement

Be in the room for a vote by your Council. Your presence will not go unnoticed, by the media or by your Councillors.

- check-in with “soft” Councillors to make sure their vote is firm
- ask a supportive Councillor's assistant to help you with last minute lobbying
- bring your vote tracking sheet
- ask for the vote to be recorded in the public record
- notify the media of Council's decision and your reaction

Celebrate!

Well done. You and your supporters have done a terrific job! Make phone calls, send out letters, hold a party – there are lots of people to thank. Don't leave out the politicians.

continued >>>

TRACK THE VOTE

Ultimately, you need the votes on Council to win. Try this handy tool – used by professional lobbyists, to help you track if you have enough votes on your side to win. Start tallying votes months beforehand (if you're able).

SAMPLE: VOTER TALLY

ward	councillor	score	comments	last talked with	yes	swing	no
#	Name	From 1-10 Judge a Councillor's support A score of 8 means they are a good swing vote or a score of 7 could mean a weak yes 10 = firm yes 0 = no chance	People that can influence their vote, issues of concern or Chair of important committee or Can influence Councillor X or Info they requested	[Date] Make sure you are staying in touch	Supporter Use to help move other Councillors Get them to help you win on the day of the vote Get them on the record supporting you – give them media opportunities	Possibility of voting your way Eventually they will decide, then add their vote to the other column	Not likely to change vote Don't spend much time on them, it's just wasted Make sure you're right
					total _____	total _____	total _____



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SOLUTIONS ARE IN OUR NATURE

Shaping Decisions: part 3 of **Driven to Action, A Citizen's Toolkit**

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