

## Meeting with your MP

### **Preparation:**

- To set up a meeting with an MP, call or visit the constituency office. Provide your name, your postal code, and the reason that you'd like to meet with the MP.
- Stay informed on your issue.
- Develop a list of questions that you have for the MP, as well as proposals for solutions.
- Bring materials that the MP can refer to later.
- Ask staff beforehand how much information the MP has on your issue.

### **At the Meeting:**

- Present your case clearly and concisely.
- Insist on a straight answer to your questions.
- If the representative agrees with you, ask for it in writing.
- Even if the MP disagrees with you, thank her for the opportunity to meet.

### **After the meeting:**

- Follow up. Write or telephone to ask for an update on the action taken as a result of your meeting.

#### Advocacy Tip # 3:

**Follow up!** After you have taken action, keep informed about the progress made on your issue. After you have signed a petition, let your MP know why you signed it. After participating in a demonstration, let your MP know. By following up on such actions, you can give more weight to your actions.

## Public Justice and Advocacy

As Christians, we are called to bear God's image by loving our neighbours, practicing justice and compassion, and by acting as stewards of creation. And as God's image-bearers, all people are created to live in dignity.

Public justice means promoting the well-being of the vulnerable in all aspects of society—as neighbours, through community groups, as churches, in non-governmental organizations, and in government. Living out this call includes being active, engaged citizens—getting to know our elected officials, staying informed, and advocating for just policies.

As citizens of a democracy, we have the power to make a difference in the policies and actions of our government. This means staying informed, voicing our opinions, and working for justice wherever possible.

### **Finding Contact Information:**

You can find out who your MP is by going to [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca).

You can find your representative in the provincial legislature at the website of your province (e.g. [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca)).

Your municipal elected officials can be found through the website of your city, town, or township.

For more advocacy tips, visit our Advocacy Toolkit at [www.cpj.ca/advocacy](http://www.cpj.ca/advocacy).



CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE

## Advocacy Guide

for ordinary citizens  
who want to make a  
difference



### **INSIDE, FIND INFORMATION ON:**

- Public Justice and Advocacy
- How to Write a Letter
- Calling your MP
- Meeting with your MP
- Tips for Effective Advocacy

A publication of Citizens for Public Justice ([www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca))

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## Getting Started

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You may be passionate about an issue of injustice, but are unsure what to do about it. And when it comes to contacting elected officials, many of us lack the information on how to do so effectively. This pamphlet is designed to give ordinary citizens the tools to confidently advocate for political change.

Before you take action, it is important to take the following three steps:

- **Do your homework.** Look for newspaper articles, websites, Parliamentary reports, etc. to find out more about the topic you are interested in. Make sure to examine opposing views as well.
- **Define your goals.** What is it that you want to accomplish? Writing down your advocacy objectives will help you clearly articulate your views.
- **Make a plan.** You may only want to take a single action, like writing a letter, or you may be interested in pursuing a longer term campaign. Either way, choose your tactics and your timing carefully.

### Advocacy Tip #1:

**Get and stay connected.** Get to know others who are working on your issue and communicate regularly. This way, you can share information and coordinate advocacy activities.

## Writing a Letter

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A personal letter can go a long way in getting a message across to a Member of Parliament. The following guidelines will help you know what to say and how to say it in letters to MPs.

### Contents:

- State your objective first, followed by a brief introduction outlining your concerns.
- Write in your own words. Make the letter personal and include your own experiences.
- Request a commitment to a specific action.
- Try to keep the letter to one page. Do not exceed two pages.
- Ask the MP to respond to your letter.

### Other Tips:

- No postage is required when you send a letter to an MP.
- Keep a copy of the letter you send that you can refer to it when you receive a response.
- Follow up. Write back to the MP, thanking him for his response, and remind him of your requests and any commitments he has made.

**For more information on advocacy, see CPJ's Advocacy Toolkit, found at [www.cpj.ca/advocacy](http://www.cpj.ca/advocacy).**

## Calling your MP

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Calling your Member of Parliament's office can be even more effective than writing a letter. One phone call can stick out in an MP's mind if you can show that you are knowledgeable, that you respect her time, and that this issue is important to her constituents.

### Format:

- Introduce yourself and identify yourself as a constituent. You can do so by providing your postal code or address.
- Give the reason for your call.
- Ask to speak to the MP directly. If you do not hear from her in a couple of days, call back.
- Ask pointed questions and request a commitment to action.

### Other Tips:

- Avoid revealing party affiliation.
- Be as brief as possible.
- Follow up. Find out what actions were taken as a result of your call, and respond appropriately.

### Advocacy Tip #2:

**Be persistent.** Write and call your MP regularly about the issue, especially as you see new developments occurring. Give the MP adequate time to respond in between contacting him, so that you can have a dialogue with him about the issue.