



# Advocacy Toolkit

for ordinary citizens who want to make a difference



a publication of Citizens for Public Justice

[www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca)

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## What is an advocacy toolkit?

Have you ever been faced with injustice, but have felt powerless to do anything about it? When it comes to changing something in the political sphere, we may do nothing because we think that politicians are too busy, that our issue may not be important compared to other issues, or that we aren't knowledgeable enough to speak out.

This toolkit is designed to show you that you have the power to influence the legislative process. It is a matter of knowing where the access points are, whom to contact, and what to say. This toolkit provides useful information on different methods of advocacy, when to use each, and how to get your voice heard most effectively.

We hope that this resource will be helpful to you in exercising your privilege to be an active and engaged Canadian citizen!\*

### Toolkit Highlights:

- To help make this toolkit user-friendly, we have created a **Glossary of Advocacy Terms** (page 4).
- In order to know which action to take on a specific issue, see our **Choosing Tactics Chart** (page 8).
- To know at which point in the legislative process to speak up, see the section on **The Legislative Process and Advocacy** (page 29).
- Samples: We have also included a **sample letter**, **sample petition**, **sample one-page brief**, and **sample press release** (page 13, 18, 22, and 26).

\*While we refer mostly to advocacy at the federal level in this toolkit, the principles and suggestions found inside can be applied to any level of government.

## Public Justice and Advocacy

At CPJ, we believe that we are called to bear God’s image by loving our neighbours, practicing justice and compassion, and by acting as stewards of creation. We also believe that, as God’s image-bearers, all people are created to live in dignity.

The Bible tells us in Micah 6:8 what God requires of us: “to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Throughout the Bible, the well-being of the most vulnerable—orphans and widows—is used as a barometer of justice for a society. Looking at the state of such populations, we can measure Canada’s success in following this call.

Public justice means promoting the well-being of the vulnerable in all aspects of life together—as neighbours, as churches, in non-governmental organizations, through community groups, 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.

To advocate simply means “to plead in favour of.” This means speaking to those in power in order to influence decisions in the political sphere. It means speaking for the marginalized and the poor, who often lack influence. It is an opportunity to pursue a just society that reflects God’s kingdom. It means thoughtful citizenship, engagement in public policy debates, and dialoguing with elected officials about issues of justice.

As citizens of a democracy, we have the power to make a difference in the policies and actions of our government. Our political leaders have a responsibility to listen to the will of the people, and each of us has the responsibility to express our views through active citizenship. This means staying informed, voicing our opinions, and working for justice wherever possible.

For a more in-depth look at public justice, see our document *Public Justice: What does it mean for citizens, governments, and CPJ?*, available at [www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca).

## Glossary of Terms

### Advocacy Terms

**Advocacy**—acting or speaking in favour of a policy, cause, or idea. (Political advocacy means working to change government policy or legislation.)

**Brief**—a document summarizing important information on a certain subject.

**Demonstration**—a public event displaying the opinion of a group of people toward an issue, made by picketing, parading, etc.

**One-page brief**—a one-to-two page document summarizing the background and purpose of an advocacy campaign.

**Petition**—a formal request, bearing signatures of those making the request, that is addressed to a person or group of persons in authority or power (such as the House of Commons), soliciting an action on the part of the recipient(s).

**Press Release**—an announcement of an event or news item sent to the press by an organization, government agency, public relations firm, etc.

### Structure of Government Terms

**Cabinet**—the executive decision-making body of the government (at both federal and provincial levels). It approves departmental drafts of government bills and proposes them to the legislature.

**Cabinet Minister**—member of the Cabinet chosen by the Prime Minister. Each Cabinet Minister is the head of at least one department such as Foreign Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration, or the Environment.

**Civil Service**—those branches of public service concerned with all governmental administrative functions outside the armed services.

**Governor General**—the Queen's representative in Canada. (The Queen is Canada's head of state.)

**House of Commons**—the elected, lower house of Parliament. It is the principal means through which Canadians can participate in legislative decision-making.

**Member of Parliament (MP)**—an elected official in the House of Commons. Each MP represents a riding.

**Member of the Provincial Parliament (MPP), Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), or Member of the National Assembly (MNA)**—elected representatives serving in provincial legislatures.

**Opposition Party Critic**—representatives from opposition parties responsible for presenting party policies in a certain area and critiquing government policy in that area.

**Parliament**—the legislative branch of the government, composed of the House of Commons and the Senate.

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**Prime Minister**—head of the government of Canada and the chairman of the Cabinet, who is the leader of the party with the most seats in the House of Commons.

**Riding**—a geographical area with representation by one Member of Parliament in the House of Commons.

**Senate**—the upper house of Parliament, meant to act as a check and balance to the House of Commons. Senators are appointed by the Governor General, on the advice of the Prime Minister. Senators can remain in the Senate until age 75.

### **Legislative Terms**

**Act**—A law made by Parliament or a provincial legislature.

**Bill** —a proposed act submitted to Parliament for approval. A bill becomes an act if it is passed (approved) by both Houses and receives royal assent.

**Royal Assent**— after a bill has been passed by the House and Senate, this is the final step in the passage of a bill through Parliament. At this stage, the Governor General approves the bill on behalf of the Queen.

## 6 Tips for Effective Advocacy

1. **Follow up!** After you have taken action, stay 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 that her constituents were present. By following up on such actions, you can demonstrate commitment to the cause and give more weight to your actions.
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.
3. **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.
4. **Diversify.** Try to get your message across in a variety of ways. Be creative in thinking up new tactics, and you will be sure to be heard!
5. **Be consistent.** It is important that decision makers receive a consistent message from everyone working on your campaign, throughout the campaign. Consistency can be achieved through formulating clear objectives and creating materials that explain your objectives concisely.
6. **Use your vote** as leverage. When contacting your elected representative, do not be afraid to let her know that her actions can translate into votes. If how she responds to your issue will matter to you at election time, let her know!

## Doing Research

Being well-informed is an essential part of advocacy. Find out as much as you can about the issue you are passionate about, what is currently being done about it, and the alternatives that have been proposed. The following are some places to begin your research:

- Newspaper articles.
- Websites of organizations like CPJ.
- Parliamentary reports on the topic.
- Websites of government departments. These can be found at [www.canada.gc.ca](http://www.canada.gc.ca), and each departmental website has press releases outlining current initiatives and stating the government's rationale for its policies, as well as information about policies and programs.
- Party websites and election platforms will tell you what the government and the opposition parties have committed to.
- The Speech from the Throne and ministerial speeches outline a government's proposed direction.
- Parliament of Canada LEGISinfo website (found at [www.parl.gc.ca/LEGISINFO](http://www.parl.gc.ca/LEGISINFO)) provides information on bills currently undergoing the parliamentary process. This site gives you

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the text of the bill, major speeches that have been made about it, and its current status. For more on the legislative process, visit our *Legislative Process and Advocacy* section.

- RSS Feeds (for the technologically-inclined). Subscribing to RSS feeds on news websites or relevant blogs will keep you up-to-date on the latest news on a specific topic.

### Access to Information

For access to government correspondence or documents pertaining to an issue, contact the government department responsible. You may be able to obtain this information informally, or you may have to submit a formal request under the Access to Information Act. If this is the case, you must fill out an Access to Information request form (found at [www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/tbsf-fsct/350-57\\_e.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/tbsf-fsct/350-57_e.asp)). There is a \$5 processing fee, and the first five hours of search and preparation are free.

### Next Steps

When you have spent some time researching your issue, the government's and your MP's stance on it, and the things that other organizations have said and done about it, you will be ready to begin envisioning your advocacy activities. Being informed will give you confidence and credibility and will help you develop clear objectives and an effective strategy. You will also be able to anticipate objections to your cause so you can formulate counterarguments to those who may oppose your view.

### Additional Resource

For information on how the government is structured, see Eugene Forsey's *How Canadians Govern Themselves* (available at [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)).

## Formulating Objectives

Having a good grasp on an issue will make it possible to define clear objectives for your advocacy work. Formulating objectives is an important step, and clearly-defined goals will bring meaning to each step of your campaign. It will also provide consistency.

### Tips for formulating objectives:

- Begin by writing down the problem, the current situation, and the solutions you propose. Think carefully about what you would like to see happen and feasible ways to bring it about.
- When possible, get input from the population affected by your issue.
- Objectives should be specific and measurable so that you can see progress along the way.
- Objectives should also be achievable within a specified time frame. This will help you keep momentum, as you will not get bogged down in objectives that are too lofty or will take more time than you have.



## Choosing tactics

Figuring out what to do about a particular issue can be the most challenging—and important—part of a campaign. The most effective advocacy strategy uses a diversity of methods, and the strategy you choose will depend largely on the issue and the political context. The following chart will help you decide which type of action to take.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Why Choose this Action?</b>	<b>Potential Outcomes</b>
<b><i>Letter-Writing (individual)</i></b>	You would like to clearly communicate to your MP the issue and what you would like to have done about it	A well-written and thoughtful letter can bring the issue to the MP's attention  He will know that you have spent the time to research the issue and contact him
<b><i>Letter-Writing Campaign</i></b>	You have a good-sized support network	If the MP receives a large volume of letters, she will know that there are many people concerned about this issue
<b><i>Calling your MP</i></b>	The issue is familiar enough to the legislator, and to you, that you can get your point across in a five-minute conversation	Making a direct connection with your MP  Having an impact while using little time and resources
<b><i>Meeting with your MP</i></b>	Effective even if the issue is not well-known to the legislator and even if you do not have a large support network  If you have a petition to present to the legislator, it is a good idea to schedule a meeting in which to present it	A very effective method to get your message across to the MP  You may learn more about the MP's position  You may learn more about how the MP can help you in your cause
<b><i>Writing to a Cabinet Minister</i></b>	You desire to see change in government policy (rather than in legislation)	Gives you access to the head of the relevant department, as well as access to the Cabinet, which is the executive decision-making body
<b><i>Public Meeting</i></b>	The issue affects many people but is also largely unknown  You would like to have a community discussion, or facilitate a debate between two officials	Builds public awareness and support  Makes elected officials and policy-makers take note

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<b>Action</b>	<b>Why Choose this Action?</b>	<b>Potential Outcomes</b>
<b><i>Petition</i></b>	The issue is straightforward (essentially a yes/no question) and has widespread support	Demonstrates public concern for the issue  Can be read in the House by your MP and can influence a Parliamentary debate
<b><i>Writing to your Local Newspaper</i></b>	You would like to bring attention to a relatively unknown issue  You would like to comment (positively or negatively) on a newspaper article  You would like to make a public statement about what the government is, or is not, doing about an issue	Raise public awareness on the issue  May impact the way the local media handles an issue  Can catch the attention of your MP, especially if you challenge him directly in your piece  You can also write a piece in support of your MP's position, which will encourage him to continue what he is doing
<b><i>Doing a Demonstration</i></b>	There is need for widespread exposure to the issue	Draws attention to the issue and gains public support. A quick way of demonstrating popular support for the cause to politicians
<b><i>Writing a One-Page Brief</i></b>	You anticipate contact with decision makers, media, and the public, and would like to send a consistent, accessible message to each	Provides your campaign with consistency and clarity  Gives others a quick way to find out about your campaign
<b><i>Meeting with civil servants</i></b>	Legislation is passed, but it needs to be implemented by a government department  You desire change a government regulation or program	Gives you access to those implementing legislation
<b><i>Blogging</i></b>	You feel you have a personal, unique perspective on the issue  You stay well-informed on the latest developments	You can reach a large number of people. If your blog is read widely enough, it will gain the attention of those in positions of power

## Working with Others

### Building an Advocacy Network

Inviting others to participate in your advocacy work is a good way to build morale and increase your influence. You may know others who are already concerned about the same cause, or you may invite others to learn more. You can also contact organizations that are already working on your cause or that may be interested in getting involved. Building relationships with others can facilitate information-sharing, and creating a wide network of advocates will strengthen your campaign!

Invite those who have personal stories to call, meet with, or write to MPs. This will give legislators a direct connection with those whom a piece of legislation affects, and it can be empowering for those who share their stories.

### Tips for Working with Others:

- Identify your objectives clearly before “going public.” Disunity may compromise your credibility before you are able to accomplish your goals. Consistency is key!
- Be clear about the responsibilities and involvement of each of the individuals or groups in your network. Identify a leader and delegate specific tasks.
- If you have a coalition of several groups, coordinate the timing of all organizations’ advocacy activities in order to have maximum impact.
- If you choose to engage in advocacy as a part of a non-profit organization, be aware that, under the Canada Revenue Agency’s guidelines for charities, you will only be able to devote 10% of your resources to advocacy (this does not include public education).

### Working with Government Officials

When it comes to working with government officials, it is important to avoid adopting an “us vs. them” mentality. Advocacy is about working with the resources that you have. If you are unwilling to work with a certain party or with the current government, it will be very difficult to bring about change.

Try to find potential allies within the government, and try to find common ground from which to start. Without compromising the firmness of your position, you can build bridges, plant seeds, and make small steps towards your goals.

## Advocacy How-Tos

### How to form relationships with policy-makers

Building relationships with decision makers puts you in a good position to advocate for change. By getting to know your representatives—your MP, MPP, MLA, MNA, city councilors, mayor, reeve or warden—and building a reputation of credibility, you can open doors, now and for the future. Below are some ways to develop a good relationship with your elected representatives.

#### **Tips for Building Relationships with Policy Makers:**

- Invite your representatives to events that relate to your cause. Show them that there will be thoughtful dialogue, and that neither they nor their parties will be verbally attacked.
- Attend events where your representative will be speaking.
- When you contact your representative about an issue that concerns you, follow up later on the progress made or lack thereof.
- Read the local paper and constituent brochures to find out what the representative is doing.
- Engage in thoughtful dialogue with your MP, and show that you want to help her do her job.
- Avoid taking an adversarial tone or engaging in adversarial actions, as this may compromise your ability to have an impact, both now and in the future.
- If you support your representative, get involved politically by volunteering in campaigning for her or working in her local office.
- Make sure that you say “thank you” or “well done” when the representative does something that you like.

#### **How to find the contact information of your elected representatives:**

- Find your MP using your postal code by going to [www2.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo](http://www2.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo).
- Go to the website of your province (e.g. [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca)) to find your representative in the provincial legislature.
- Your municipal elected officials can be found through the website of your city, town, or township.
- Contact information for government officials can also be found in the Blue Pages of your local phone book.

## How to write a letter to an MP

A personal letter can go a long way in reaching a Member of Parliament. Whether you are writing as a part of a letter-writing campaign or on your own, the following guidelines will help you know how to write an advocacy letter to an MP.

### Style:

- A personal letter is much more effective than a form letter, so try to put it in your own words.
- If you can, make the letter personal by including your own experiences.
- An email is just as effective as a letter by post, as Parliamentary staff handle both in the same way. (Remember to include your postal mailing address if you write an email.)
- Emphasize two or three major points, and keep to the same topic.
- Try to keep the letter to one page. Do not exceed two pages. If you have more information to share, include in the envelope a brief on the topic or any other informational materials.

### Contents:

- Your objective should be stated from the outset. Follow this with a brief introduction outlining your concerns.
- Describe your interest in the issue and your credentials to speak on it.
- Ask questions that provoke a response. Ask for more information or for clarification on your MP's position.
- Request a commitment to a specific action, and give a rationale for your request.
- Thank the MP for any positive action he has taken in the past on this issue.
- Request that the MP 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. This way you can refer back to it when you receive a response.
- Share your letter with other individuals and organizations like CPJ who are also advocating for your cause. That way, your network of advocates knows what you have communicated to the MP.
- Follow up. Write back to the MP, thanking him for his response, and remind him of your requests and any commitments he has made.

You can find a sample letter on the following page. You can use it as a guide to write a letter on any issue you're passionate about!

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Date

Mr. John Smith  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

### SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing concerning the inclusion of a federal poverty reduction strategy in the Budget 2009. One in ten Canadians lives in poverty. A comprehensive strategy, built into the federal budget, could significantly reduce this number and change the lives of many poor Canadians. Your party has stopped short of announcing an official poverty reduction strategy, and I hope that you will do all in your power to bring about positive change in this area.

I have volunteered at a local food bank for six years, and while it is rewarding to be a part of this work, it saddens me to see more and more people in our community in need of this type of assistance just to live day-to-day. I believe that, through the implementation of a federal comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, many of our clients could be lifted out of poverty.

Your party has committed to many actions to address poverty in Canada, including reforming employment insurance, offering affordable housing and childcare, and seeking justice for aboriginal peoples. Your party has also called for Parliamentary hearings to address a federal poverty reduction strategy. Please now adopt an **official comprehensive poverty reduction strategy**, which would include:

- A long-term vision with measurable targets and timelines.
- A plan of action and a budget that coordinates initiatives within and across governments.
- Accountability structures.
- A set of agreed-upon poverty indicators to plan and monitor progress.

Thank you for your commitment in the past to justice and combating poverty. Will you now work towards a federal poverty reduction strategy to be announced by your party? What specific actions will you take towards this goal?

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Jane Doe  
321 Justice St.  
City, Province A1B 2C3

## How to call your MP

A quick phone call to your Member of Parliament's office can be even more effective than writing a letter in some cases. As a constituent, you may even be able to speak to your MP directly. 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.

If you speak to a member of the MP's staff, this can also be very effective, as they will have the time to hear you out, and they have the ear of the MP.

### 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, and explain what concerns you.
- Ask to speak to the MP directly, but do not be surprised if you must speak to a member of her staff instead.
- Ask pointed questions.
- Ask for a commitment to action.

### Other Tips:

- Let the MP know that this issue will matter to you in the next election.
- Avoid revealing party affiliation or sympathies. (If you show that your vote is already cast for a certain party, the MP may not have the incentive to respond to your requests.)
- Be as brief as you can while outlining your concerns. Show that you respect the MP's time.
- Even though you may strongly disagree with the MP's stance, have a calm and respectful dialogue. Show that you are willing to work with her.
- Follow up. Find out what actions were taken as a result of your call, and respond appropriately.

### How to meet with your MP

Your Member of Parliament is more accessible than you think. If you are passionate about an issue, respectful of the MP's time, and willing to take the time for a meeting, it is more than likely that he will also be willing to meet with you.

#### Setting up a meeting:

- 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.
- If the MP is unavailable for a meeting, request a meeting with a member of his staff. Staff have more time to meet with you and they can bring your particular concerns to the MP.

#### Preparation:

- Stay informed on the issue.
- Develop a list of questions that you have for the MP, as well as specific proposals for solutions.
- Bring materials that the MP can refer to later. A one-page brief gives him a concise background on the issue, your concerns, and your proposed solutions.
- Ask staff beforehand how much information the MP has on your issue. Offer to send informational materials ahead of time.
- In a typical meeting with an MP, the MP talks two-thirds of the time, you one-third. Be prepared to listen.
- Focus on how you can help the MP do his job. Where are the gaps in information? Do you have information that will be of value to him?

#### At the meeting:

- Present your case clearly and concisely.
- Focus on one or two issues.
- Insist on a straight answer to your questions.
- If the representative agrees with you, get it in writing.
- Even though you may be very passionate about your issue, and may disagree strongly with the MP's stance, have a calm and respectful dialogue. Show that you are willing to work with him.
- Even if the MP disagrees with you, thank him for the time and opportunity to meet.
- A meeting with an MP usually lasts no more than an hour. If you have an agreed-upon time limit, stick to it.

#### After the meeting:

- Follow up. Write a letter thanking the MP for meeting with you. In your letter, summarize any commitments that were made, and ask for an update on what has been done.



## How to write a petition

A petition is a good tool for a straightforward issue that has widespread support.

There are fifteen minutes set aside daily in the House of Commons for petitions to be read. There is no debate following the reading of the petition, but the government is required to respond to your petition within 45 days. Your petition could spark interest in Members of Parliament or it could influence a debate already occurring in the House of Commons.

Below are some tips for writing a petition and getting signatures.

### General guidelines for writing a petition:

- The petition statement should be clear and concise.
- Begin the statement with a phrase like: *We the undersigned hereby affirm...*
- Keep it as short as possible, while laying out your concerns.
- Start with general principles and progressively get more specific, ending with your requests.
- Make sure that the petition statement appears on each page of the petition.

If an MP is to read a petition in the House, she must first submit it to the Clerk of Petitions, who examines it to make sure that its form and content meet Parliamentary specifications. If it fails to meet them, it cannot be read for the record. It is therefore important to follow the guidelines for an official petition to Parliament. You can also send a draft petition, before collecting signatures, to a Member of Parliament to ensure that it is correctly worded and to find out if she will be willing to read it in the House.

### Guidelines for an official petition to Parliament:

- Address it to the House of Commons (not the Prime Minister or any individual MP).
- Use a standard paper size (8 ½ x 11 inches or 8 ½ by 14 inches).
- Do not attach any other documents to the petition or print the petition on the reverse of another document.
- The petition must address an issue that is under federal jurisdiction and must ask the government to take or not take a specific action.
- It must contain a minimum of 25 Canadians' signatures. Each signature should be accompanied by the signatory's city and province of residence.
- There is no minimum age requirement for signing a petition.
- Note that certification usually takes three to five working days, and that petitions cannot be certified during an election period.

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### Other Tips:

- Bring your petition to events where you expect there will be people who support it.
- Follow-up is important because it demonstrates that there is real commitment behind the signatures. Encourage signatories to write, call, or visit MPs to explain why they signed the petition.
- Any MP can present a petition in the House on any topic. Some MPs have a policy of presenting any petition brought to them by constituents.
- The Government must respond to each petition within 45 calendar days of its presentation. If this fails to occur, the Member who presented the petition designates a committee of the House to look into the reasons why it was not responded to.

You can find a sample petition on the following page.

### Additional Information

*For questions about petitioning the federal government, call the Clerk of Petitions in Ottawa at (613) 992-9511. You can also find more information from the official House of Commons Petition Guide, which you can find easily by typing "House of Commons Petition Guide" into a search engine.*

## PETITION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

**THAT**

- 1 in every 10 Canadians lives in poverty.
- Persistent poverty impacts the dignity of many Canadians, and represents a serious cost to individuals, to our society, and to our economy.
- Comprehensive federal poverty reduction strategies have been used successfully in other countries to combat poverty.

**THEREFORE**, your petitioners request the House of Commons to include a **federal comprehensive poverty reduction strategy** in the Budget 2009. Such a strategy should include:

- Measurable targets and timelines
- Coordination within and across governments
- Accountability structures
- Poverty indicators to plan and monitor progress

**Signatures**

(Sign your own name. Do not print.)

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**Addresses**

(Give your full home address, or your city and province, or province and postal code.)

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## How to organize a demonstration

Demonstrations can be an effective visible statement of support for a cause. They can increase public awareness or public support for the issue, and they can send a clear and strong message to decision makers.

### Beforehand:

- Advertise to any organizations and individuals that would be interested in participating to ensure that there will be a large turnout.
- Invite elected officials who support your cause.
- If you have several groups participating, try to develop a common focus and purpose.
- You may need a “parade” permit from the city in order to hold the demonstration. Make sure that you follow proper procedures.
- Think about timing. If you are in the process of forming relationships with policy-makers, a demonstration with the intent to protest the government could alienate you from them. On the other hand, a friendly demonstration with the intent to raise awareness could improve your relationships with government officials by giving you more exposure.

### During:

- Carry banners or placards with simple messages that can be read three metres away.
- Distribute leaflets which identify your group and explain your cause.
- Designate someone as the spokesperson if the media requests interviews.
- Designate another person to bring a camera and record the event.

### Afterward:

- Encourage participants to follow up with their representatives to tell them why they participated in the demonstration. This shows that the participants are committed to the cause and want to dialogue about it.

### How to write a one-page brief

A one-page brief is a useful tool to communicate your message to MPs, the media, and others. The one-page brief summarizes the problem as you see it, the background information, and the solutions that you propose. It is a good resource to bring to a meeting with an MP, to give to the media (for instance, if you are holding a media-covered event), or for anyone who is interested in learning about your issue.

The one-page brief is particularly helpful if you are working with others on the issue. Having key ideas summarized in one page will help to maintain consistency within your group or organization. If one page is not enough to cover the essentials, it may spill over to a second page. Anything longer than two pages will probably not be read in full.

#### What to include in the one-page brief:

- Your name and contact information
- Your key message
- The problem as you see it
- Background on the issue and, if appropriate, your past involvement in it
- The rationale for your solution
- Your recommendations

You can find a sample one-page brief on the following page.

#### Additional Resource

For more information, see Amanda Sussman's *The Art of the Possible* (McLelland and Stewart: Toronto, 2007)

**A Poverty Reduction Strategy for the Budget 2009***Citizens for Public Justice*[cpj@cpj.ca](mailto:cpj@cpj.ca)

(613) 232 0275

**Summary**

A comprehensive federal anti-poverty strategy would make a significant difference for millions of poor Canadians. This poverty reduction strategy should include a vision with measurable targets and timelines, an action plan and budget, mechanisms of accountability and indicators to monitor progress.

**Issue**

- One in ten Canadians lives in poverty, and Canada's poverty rates haven't changed substantially in the past 25 years.
- Persistent poverty impacts the dignity of many Canadians and represents a serious cost to individuals, to our society, and to our economy.
- Poverty undermines the right of every person to live with dignity, to participate in society, and to meet basic needs.

**Background**

- In 1989, the House of Commons passed a unanimous resolution calling for child poverty to be eliminated in Canada by the year 2000. Yet child poverty rates have not improved.

**Rationale**

- Successful anti-poverty strategies in Ireland and the United Kingdom are evidence that a federal comprehensive strategy, if implemented correctly, can significantly reduce poverty.
- The National Council of Welfare released a report in 2007 stating that there are four components to an effective poverty reduction strategy. They include: measurable targets and timelines, an action plan and a budget, mechanisms of accountability and poverty indicators to monitor progress.

**Recommendation**

- Parliament should announce a federal poverty reduction strategy in the Budget 2009 that includes measurable targets and timelines, an action plan and a budget, mechanisms of accountability and poverty indicators to monitor progress.

**Contact**

For further information, contact Chandra Pasma at 613 323 0275 x. 223, or [Chandra@cpj.ca](mailto:Chandra@cpj.ca).

### How to organize a public meeting

A public meeting can help you to gain support for your cause by educating other members of your community. It can also catch the attention of the media and decision-makers. It is a forum for interaction, for discussion of alternative viewpoints, and can provide an opportunity to question a public official.

You can structure the meeting in various ways. It could be a roundtable discussion, a “town hall meeting,” or a debate. The format is up to you and depends on who will be there and what you will discuss.

#### Steps to organizing a public meeting:

1. Determine the purpose of holding the meeting. Keep a clear and tangible focus.
2. Approach other groups who might want to help organize or attend the event.
3. Choose a public place with adequate accessibility, seating capacity, and sound system.
4. Publicize:
  - Send a public service announcement to the media and post bulletins in the community.
  - Prepare a press release summarizing the background to, and purpose of, the meeting.
  - Contact the media and invite them to cover the event.
5. Invite local representatives and elected officials responsible for the issue to attend.
6. Invite representatives from relevant organizations as well.
7. Distribute responsibilities for welcoming, chairing the meeting, moderating a debate, introducing speakers, arranging for audio-visual equipment, etc.
8. Determine meeting format and time limit.
9. Have informational materials available.

It is most beneficial to time a public awareness event, such as a public meeting, just before implementing an advocacy strategy. The event will most likely increase public support on the issue, apply pressure to legislators to respond, and will provide momentum for your campaign.



## How to work with the media

Working with the media can also be an important component to an advocacy strategy. It can increase public awareness and can also catch the attention of elected officials. You may find yourself engaging with the media through writing press releases and letters to the editor, or by offering information to a journalist. The media may also contact you for an interview. It's important to know how to approach the media and how to get your voice heard through newspapers, television, and the radio.

### How to approach the media:

- You should approach newspapers first because TV and radio journalists often get their stories from the newspaper. They are also able to go more in-depth on a topic.
- Mondays and Fridays are generally slow news days, so approaching a newspaper on Sunday or Thursday is best.
- When you see an article or story that you like, or if you see a negative or incorrect story, write a letter to the editor.
- The best way to approach a journalist is to write a to-the-point email and follow up with a phone call. Show the reporter that you are not trying to sell them on your view, but trying to help them do their job by providing useful information and an interesting story.
- Send press releases following meetings with MPs (make sure that you let the MP know that the meeting is “on the record”), after newsworthy events relating to your issue, and before events that you or your group plan.
- For a more in-depth campaign, you may want to send an entire press kit, which includes a press release, your one-page brief, a factsheet, and a biography of the organization or spokesperson.

### What to do when the media contacts you for an interview:

- Write down the name of the publication and the name of the journalist. Ask him questions about the focus of the story, who else will be interviewed, etc.
- If you need time to prepare, ask him to call back later.
- Be prepared with statistics and anecdotes.
- Keep in mind the key messages of your campaign so that you do not get off track. Keep control of the interview by returning to them often.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and offer to get back to the journalist promptly.

### Additional Resource

For more information, see Amanda Sussman's *The Art of the Possible* (McLelland and Stewart: Toronto, 2007).

### How to write a press release

A press release provides information to various sectors of the media concerning a newsworthy topic or event. It is a great way to get information to the public. It should be short and should catch the attention of the news editor. You can send it by email, mail, or fax.

#### Writing a Press Release:

- Begin with an eye-catching headline. Keep it short and to the point. You can include a subhead too, which expands on your headline in a few more words.
- Write in an “inverted pyramid” style. Place the most important points—“who, where, what, when, why and how”—at the beginning, followed by the details.
- Write in the present tense and use action verbs.
- Sprinkle relevant quotations throughout.
- Try to time the release when the issue or event will be a top story for the media, or try to tie your issue into one of the big stories of the day.
- Call the day after you send the press release to ask if the journalist would like to interview you. Don’t push this, as the media receive a large number of press releases, but make it clear that you are available to them.

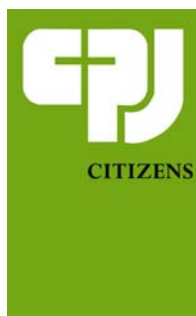
#### Press Release Format:

- Only use one side of the page.
- Use wide margins to allow room for editors’ comments and instructions.
- Try to stay to one page.
- Write as a reporter—not from a first-person perspective.
- Provide pronunciation guides for unusual names.
- Include contact information for at least two people who can answer questions about the release.
- Type “# # #” centred below the last line. This signals the end of the release.

You can find a sample press release on the following page.

#### Additional Resource:

For more information, go to <http://www.publicityinsider.com/release.asp>

CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Contact: John Doe****Phone: 613 232 0279 x. 590****Email: [john@cpj.ca](mailto:john@cpj.ca)****Date**

## **ENVISIONING CANADA WITHOUT POVERTY: CPJ Launches National Poverty Reduction Campaign and Tour**

**Ottawa, ON:** Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) has just launched its national Envisioning Canada without Poverty campaign and tour. CPJ will be empowering CPJ members and concerned citizens across Canada to advocate for poverty reduction in Canada. The first stop on this national tour will be [date], in Ottawa. The workshop will be held at the [location], from [time]. Other stops include Halifax, London, Winnipeg and Edmonton.

Join CPJ for an engaging dialogue on poverty and learn about a federal poverty reduction strategy for Canada. Poverty undermines the right of every person to live with dignity, to participate in society and to meet basic needs. It is therefore our collective responsibility to respond to the problem of poverty as part of the biblical call to do justice. Learn how to engage with your government and involve your faith community in this effort.

“This is one of CPJ’s most important campaigns,” according to Jane Smith, executive director of a local mission. “It is time that Canada got serious about addressing poverty, and it will take the actions of many citizens to bring about this change.”

Resources on poverty reduction, reflections on faith and poverty and tools for faith communities are available on our website [www.canadawithoutpoverty.ca](http://www.canadawithoutpoverty.ca). These tools will empower you to ask for your Member of Parliament’s commitment to a federal poverty reduction strategy.

###

CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices that reflect God’s call for love, justice and stewardship.

For more information, visit [www.canadawithoutpoverty.ca](http://www.canadawithoutpoverty.ca) or contact John Doe at (613) 232-0275 x590.

CITIZENS for PUBLIC JUSTICE  
Suite 501, 309 Cooper St, Ottawa, ON K2P 0G5 · 1-800-667-8046 · [www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca)  
FAITH · JUSTICE · POLITICS

### How to meet with civil servants

Civil servants are an important, yet often overlooked, part of the policy process. Once legislation is passed, it is up to the appropriate department to carry it out.

There are several reasons to contact a civil servant. The department may delay the implementation of important legislation. You may also have concerns about the way in which the legislation is implemented. In these cases, it may be helpful to contact a civil servant who can put the legislation into action in the desired way.

#### **1. Finding the official you're looking for**

The best way to find out whom to contact is by looking at an organizational chart for the government department. This chart can be found at most departmental websites, which are under "Departments and Agencies" at [www.gc.ca](http://www.gc.ca). Study the chart and try to identify the person who will most likely be carrying the file you are interested in. If the organizational chart does not include names, you can find the given person's name through the Government Employee Directory (found by typing "Government Employee Directory into a search engine). If you are still unsure whom to contact, call the Minister's office to find out who carries the file.

#### **2. Setting up a meeting**

The key to securing, and successfully carrying out, a meeting with a civil servant is to do your homework. Find out as much as you can about what that person's responsibility is regarding your issue. Time your request according to when the official will be dealing with the particular file you're interested in.

## Additional Resources

### The Legislative Process and Advocacy

It's important to understand how a bill is passed through Parliament and eventually becomes a law, so that you know when and how to influence the process.

#### How a bill becomes a law:

1. In the first stage is the **introduction** of the bill. A motion is introduced to put a bill on the parliamentary agenda. This is usually done by a government minister, but a private member can also introduce a motion for a private member's bill. Any MP can introduce a private member's bill on any topic, but it may be difficult to pass it, especially in a majority government. Nonetheless, this is the primary mechanism for the opposition to enact legislation.
2. Next, there is the **first reading** in the house. The law is introduced to members of Parliament, but no debate is held. The bill is printed and given a number. A House bill is given C-# and a Senate bill is given S-#.
3. After the **second reading**, there is a debate in which individual members can discuss the issues raised in the bill. At this stage, it is the general principles of the bill, and not the fine details, that are discussed.
4. If the bill passes the second reading, it goes on to the **committee stage**. In this stage, a subcommittee or standing committee (composed of members from all parties) reviews the legislation in detail. Each clause is discussed and considered, and amendments are proposed. Witnesses may also be brought in to provide testimony. When the committee has finished its review, it orders that the bill be sent back to the House of Commons.
5. In the **report stage**, the House of Commons reviews the amendments proposed by the committee. There is also opportunity for members not on the committee to propose additional amendments. Each amendment is moved, debated, and voted on by the House of Commons.
6. In the **third reading**, the bill is sent back to the House for a final reading and debate. The final vote is then taken. If there are unresolved issues with the legislation, then it may be sent back to committee for review and further amendments.
7. If the bill passes the third reading, the House sends a **message to the Senate**, requesting that it also pass the bill.
8. The bill passes through the same process (stages 1-6) in the Senate. The Senate only has power to delay passage of the bill or suggest changes to the House. It cannot defeat the bill. *(If the bill is originally introduced in the Senate, then stages 1-6 occur in the Senate first, then in the House of Commons.)*
9. The final step is **Royal Assent**. When the bill is approved by both the House and the Senate, it is sent to the Governor General for Royal Assent. When it has passed this stage, the bill is officially an Act of Parliament.

## Citizens for Public Justice Advocacy Toolkit

### Advocacy possibilities at different stages

<b>Step</b>	<b>Advocacy Possibilities</b>
Ahead of time	Look for signs of new legislation  Work with legislators to draft legislation
First Reading	Study the bill  Share reasons for concern or support with others—the media, the public, MPs  Ask for withdrawal of the bill if necessary
Second Reading	Same as for first reading, but also begin to ask for hearings in anticipation of committee stage
Committee Stage	Lobby for hearings and suggest witnesses  Recommend amendments  Make view known to media and MPs
Report Stage	Make your views on the proposed amendments known to the media and MPs
Third Reading	Encourage MPs to vote for or against the bill
Senate (Same process as above)	Repeat above process in Senate

## Advocacy Resources

Sussman, Amanda. *The Art of the Possible* McLelland and Stewart: Toronto, 2007

Milne, Glen. *Making Policy: A Guide to the Federal Government's Policy Process*. Milne: Ottawa, 2007.  
(Available at [www.makingpolicy.com](http://www.makingpolicy.com))