

how to hold a successful meeting with your MP

Developing long-lasting relationships with Members of Parliament (MP) has been one of the key components of Results' success over the last 30 years. Organizing regular face-to-face meetings with your MP is one of the most effective ways to build a long-lasting and impactful relationship.

Here is a breakdown of a typical MP meeting:

- Request a meeting with an MP
- Introduce yourself and the organization you represent
- Give background on the issue
- Express what it is you need them to do your information (a clear ask)
- Prepare a one pager for the MP to use after the meeting is over
- Thank them for their time and follow up with them after the meeting

getting the meeting

- 1. Know who your MP is.** Parliamentary convention means that MPs will generally only deal with concerns raised by their own constituents. If you are not sure who your MP is, you can find out through [this website](#). You will need to enter your full postal code.
- 2. Book your meeting.** Email your MP's main account (firstname.lastname@parl.gc.ca) and from there, they will send it to the appropriate office. Remember to ask how long your appointment is likely to be so that you can plan accordingly. You may be asked to give a short summary of the issue that you would like to raise so that your MP can be prepared. You should also say if you are planning to bring anyone else along to the meeting with you.

things to keep in mind

- 1. Plan ahead.** It is important to remember MPs are rarely in their constituency office when the House of Commons is sitting, therefore it is important to reach out early as

the weeks and weekends fill up fast.

- 2. Connect the issues to the voters.** Especially in the constituency office, the link to the issue and why it matters to their voters is a very important connection to make (example: explain many former UN retirees are in their riding and are following this issue closely).
- 3. Get creative.** Face to face meetings with your MPs are effective but you are more likely to get more visibility with your issue if you attempt to think outside the box for your meetings. For example, plan a community BBQ or host a roundtable with their office. It is a great way for you to show your MP you can mobilize people on this issue and helps build that relationship with their office.

before the meeting

- 1. Do your research.** Find out what issues your MP cares about and whether they have taken an active interest in international development, either inside or outside of Parliament. You can find this information by reading their biography and researching which committees they sit on in Parliament and what issues they regularly speak about. To help with understanding who your MP is, visit the Parliament's website at ourcommons.ca. You can also visit openparliament.ca (independent website voluntarily built and maintained by a Canadian citizen interested in parliamentary work) onto which you can subscribe to receive an email whenever your MP speaks in House debates; consult a word cloud of their most used words; and get an overview of their latest activities including voting record. Contact the Results office if you would like help gathering this information and to help define the topic that is most strategic to discuss with your MP.
- 2. Prepare an agenda.** Plan in advance how you would like to structure your meeting. You might find it helpful to prepare an outline of the key points that you would like to make, in case of the event that the conversation goes off in an unexpected direction and you need a prompt to get back to the topic of the meeting. It is also useful to have an outline with you in case your mind goes blank on the day!
- 3. Agree on roles.** We encourage having more than one person attending the meeting. If that is possible, make sure to agree in advance who will be saying what as well as who will take notes, keep time, be responsible to ask for a photo to be used on social

media, etc. Please refer to the [MP meeting planning form](#) to help clarify your roles.

- 4. Practice speaking.** Create a brief two or three minute laser talk to quickly, but powerfully, introduce the issue to your MP. After you have prepared your laser talk, make sure to practice it with at least one other person so that you are confident on the day. Be brief, clear and to the point and don't be afraid to show your passion. Consult our [laser talk guidelines](#).
- 5. Prepare your materials.** It might be useful to leave your MP with a summary of the key points that you raised at your meeting, as well as a reminder of the request that you have made. Leave yourself enough time to prepare this in advance, as well as any additional materials such as case studies that your MP might find useful. Don't hesitate to be in touch with the Results office for support in developing a leave behind for your MP.

at the meeting: building the relationship

- 1. Share your story.** Personal stories are a really powerful way of engaging others and conveying your passion and commitment. If this is your first meeting with your MP, you might want to start the meeting by sharing why it is that you care about the issue that you are raising.
- 2. Acknowledge your MP.** MPs rarely hear the words 'thank you' from their constituents. Always thank them for supportive actions that they have taken in the past or simply thank them for making the time to meet with you.
- 3. Be concise.** Your meeting isn't going to last very long so be ready to summarize the issue and your request in less than 5 minutes so that you can leave the remaining time for questions and discussion.
- 4. Know both sides of the story.** There may be coherent arguments against what you are asking for. Be prepared and do your homework to counter any opposition. If you don't know the answer or how to respond, tell your MP you will get them further information — it's a great excuse to follow-up and build a relationship with their office.
- 5. Avoid an argument.** Unfortunately, not all MPs will be supportive of our issues. Fair, balanced, and thoughtful conversations will keep the door to your MP's office even if

you don't find common ground at this particular meeting. Always leave with a thank you and a commitment to follow up with relevant information.

- 6. Make the issues real.** Facts and statistics are abstract and impersonal. Sharing a story or case study will put a human face on the issue and get your MP emotionally involved. Look out for a powerful video, photograph or article that you could show during your meeting.
- 7. Make clear requests and ask for a response.** Often, the main reason advocates have unsatisfactory meetings is that their requests were not clear and specific enough. Your MP will very likely be waiting for you to get to the point of what it is that you would like him or her to do. In addition to your specific requests, don't be afraid to ask your MP what else they think they can do (whether they say yes or no to your original request).
- 8. Take a photo.** Don't forget to ask to take a photo with your MP and to validate that it can be shared on social media. Let them know that they will be tagged on the photo! MPs like to have visibility and show that they are actively meeting with constituents so they will likely be happy that you asked.

after the meeting

- 1. Congratulate yourself.** Meeting with your MP is a huge achievement and a really important step for engaging them as a long-term international development champion.
- 2. Send a 'thank you'.** Send a letter or email to your MP to thank them for the meeting. If you promised to provide them with any additional information, make sure to include this in your message.
- 3. Follow up.** Without follow up, your effort in scheduling a meeting and speaking powerfully about our issues could be wasted. If your MP committed to do something, set a reminder to follow this up in a few weeks in case you haven't yet had a response.
- 4. Report your meeting.** It is very valuable to let the Results Canada office know that you had a meeting. This helps the wider efforts to do strategic advocacy work. Make sure to **track your actions** on Results Canada's website.

- 5. Next engagement opportunity.** Continue to take opportunities as they arise to engage with your MP whether it is by sending them an email, tweeting at them, planning a future meeting, attending their upcoming local event or sharing your latest published letter to the editor. MPs love to hear from their constituent on what is important to them. Polite, respectful but firm persistency is key!

Updated: February 2020