

HOW TO LOBBY AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

Want to know the best way to make sure that elected officials understand your position? Meet with them directly to share your perspective and get to know them better.

Follow these tips to make sure that your meeting goes smoothly and that you make a real impact.

1. DEFINE YOUR ISSUE AND CHOOSE YOUR TARGET

Your issue must be one that can be addressed by the level of government you are lobbying. You should be able to articulate your issue in a few clear concise sentences. Some questions to consider:

What specifically do you want done about the issue?

How does your issue affect the people that this politician represents?

How many other people and organizations support your lobbying efforts?

2. SET UP A MEETING

Contact the elected official's office in the riding to set up a meeting date and time. Suggest you need no more than 30 or 60 minutes. 30 minutes is ample time for an intro meeting. If they only offer a virtual meeting, take it.


When calling or emailing, identify yourself, WHERE YOU LIVE, and who you represent. Briefly state the reason for meeting with the elected official. Many offices rely heavily now on email because their staff may be working from home or be on the road with their MP.

Get the name of the person you arranged the meeting with for the purpose of future contact with that office.

Once the meeting time and date have been set, ensure all the details are in writing, including the date and the location. You may also include the names of the other members who'll be attending the meeting with you.

If the meeting isn't taking place for some time, call or email a few days before the meeting to reconfirm.

3. PREPARE FOR THE MEETING



Plan for a 30 minute meeting. Even if you have been given more time, don't expect you will necessarily have it. MPs don't want to be lectured at and no one appreciates being overwhelmed with information. Everyone wants to be part of the conversation.

Do your homework on the MP. Find some common ground. What has this MP done to advance public safety or enrich the quality of life in your community? Find a way to mention some of their contributions to the community.

Decide who will be going to the meeting. The elected official's office may ask how many and who will be at the meeting.

Hold a pre-meeting briefing session for all of those who will be meeting with the elected official to:

- review the purpose of the meeting;
- review the materials you will be using and the document(s) you will be leaving with the elected official;
- decide who the main spokesperson will be;
- make sure everyone knows where and when the meeting will take place and confirm they will be able to attend.

Get everyone together a few minutes before the actual meeting time at or near the meeting location. Briefly review the agenda, and set out the order in which you want to proceed, who is to be responsible for which section and how different issues are to be brought up.

4. STICK TO THE POINT

Present your position clearly and request follow-up. Your introductory remarks for the MP should not be more than 15 minutes maximum. After you have presented information, you should invite the MP to respond and seek to have a conversation.

Even if the elected official is sincerely interested in discussing the issue and time is not a problem, do your best to not go beyond the allotted time.

To the best of your ability, don't be sidetracked by other issues. The elected official may be trying to avoid the real reason for your meeting, or may not really understand what your concerns are.

Listen well.

Much of lobbying is listening, looking for indications of the elected official's views, and finding opportunities to provide good information.

Keep your cool.

Be forceful in stating your position, but don't allow yourself to be trapped into a heated exchange.

Remember that you are there on behalf of all members of your local.

Answer questions.

Reply to the elected official's questions if you have the answers. If you don't have the information, tell the elected official you'll get back to him or her with the answer.

Don't try to bluff or give answers that you're not sure of. It will only weaken your case and decrease your credibility. Make sure you follow-up with the information requested.

Don't make idle threats.

For example, if the elected official is not supportive, don't threaten to throw him or her out at the next election. A better tactic is to remind the elected official that you represent union members who are voters in his or her riding who are concerned about the elected official's position on this issue.

The best tactic is to have others show their support too through telephone calls, letters and visits.



5. DEMAND ACTION

If the elected official signals support for the union's position, ask him/her to:

- discuss your position with other members of his or her caucus;
- raise questions with members of government on the issue;
- put a motion forward for discussion in the legislature;

- agree to submit signed petitions you have gathered on your issue;
- generate support from elected officials among other parties to put pressure on the government to act on your behalf;
- write to the elected official responsible outlining his or her concern about the issue;
- make a public statement on the issue supporting your position;
- consult with you on any further developments around the issue.

6. FOLLOW-UP

Send a follow-up letter to the elected official thanking him or her for meeting with you.

You can also use this opportunity to restate your position on the issue as well as to confirm what action the elected official has agreed to take.

If the elected official did not indicate support at the meeting, request his or her support again or that he/she reconsider his or her position.

Monitor the elected official's performance on the issue.

When the elected official carries out the actions promised, thank the elected official for his or her support. If the elected official hasn't followed through, a polite reminder by telephone or e-mail will let the elected official know you're watching what he/she is doing (or not doing).

Remember: Keep the rest of the activists and union members involved in your campaign informed about your lobbying efforts by putting together a short report outlining your activities.

7. FILL OUT THE USJE LOBBY REPORT FORM

To ensure the greatest impact of your lobby session, it is extremely important that you complete the USJE Lobby Report Form at your earliest convenience. You can obtain the form from our website: usje-sesj.com/en/lobbying-information-report/.

SYNDICAT DES EMPLOYÉ-E-S DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA JUSTICE

USJE  **SESJ**

UNION OF SAFETY AND JUSTICE EMPLOYEES