

Make a connection

Invite your elected officials to one of your club's social events or involve them in a fundraiser. Invite them as a (non-partisan) speaker. Getting to know them socially may help when you need to connect with them officially.

Before the meeting

- Determine the objectives for your visit. Do not go just to introduce yourselves. Use a letter for that.
- Prior to an important vote, ask for a short meeting (7-10 minutes) for concerns. Use longer meetings to bring up community issues.
- Have your facts, and where possible, local stories. If this is part of a larger province-wide or national concern, either Ontario Council or the National Office will have provided backgrounders to use.

"If you need to get your local politician onside, please step away from the computer. A personal visit is most impactful, followed by a telephone call. It's harder, but it works better. Trust me on this."

Graham Steele, *The Effective Citizen* 2017

Have an "ask"

- If this is more than a friendly annual meeting, have an 'ask'.
- The 'ask' can include support for action, or lack of support; an invitation, a petition, or some ideas for Question Period.
- Do try to show how it can benefit your community. For national and provincial 'asks', depend on the backgrounders to understand their feasibility, implications and the message. Mixed messages tend to be ignored.

Know about your representative and their riding

- Take a bit of time before your meeting to familiarize yourself with their background.
- What committees do they sit on? What role do they play in their party (are they a Minister? Opposition Critic?) If a Minister or Critic, involve either Ontario Council or National for some help.
- Never go alone but limit the delegation to no more than four. The Board must authorize.
- Be prepared to meet with staff rather than the representative. Just as valuable.

At the meeting

- Thank them for meeting with you. Tell them about your Club. Keep it brief, but as votes are a politician's currency, tell them the number of members and/or the involvement in the community.
- Don't just drink tea or talk about grandchildren. Leave that for a social event.

- Present the issue you're concerned about. **Be brief and to the point.** If they want more information on your position, tell them you will get it. Be non-partisan. Keep them guessing about your support.
- Ask questions, or offer them assistance – 'how can we help you'
- Leave information with them – a one-page fact sheet or backgrounder is ideal.
- Be prepared to be told it's not their jurisdiction, that they'll think about it, etc.
- The staff are the link. Thank them.

Following up

- Call and thank the assistant and/or policy adviser.
- Send a letter to your representative thanking them for their time and reinforcing the key points made at the meeting.
- Report back to your Executive and write a report of your meeting for the club newsletter. Send a note to your Regional Director.

Resources

CFUW Ontario Council, *Connecting with Elected Representatives* <https://cfuwontcouncil.org/advocacy/advocacy-tools/> More information about connecting with officials in all governments, plus some more hints for action.

Graham Steele, *The Effective Citizen, How to Make Politicians Work for You*, Nimbus Publishing, 2017 Good practical advice from a former Nova Scotia NDP Minister of Finance.