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HERE!**





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Amnesty International and the Canadian Council for Refugees



@refugeecampaign

Lobbying your MP: When you'd rather meet than tweet!

Training Materials on Refugee Rights

March 23, 2016

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What is lobbying and why is lobbying important?

- Lobbying is any attempt or effort by an individual, business firm or organization to influence the actions of government.
- Federal lobbying activity is covered under Canada's Lobbying Act
 - people who are paid to lobby must register
 - people who lobby without being paid are not required to register
 - charities and their staff are subject to rules under both lobbying and income tax law
- Lobbying is important because:
 - It can be used to influence public policy in between elections
 - It signals to government what people want them to be doing
 - It works in some cases
 - Other groups are devoting efforts to influence public policy



Targets of lobbying

- **Direct (inside government):** departmental public servants, cabinet ministers, MPs, regulatory agencies, etc.
- **Indirect (outside government):** media, other interest groups, foreign governments, corporations
- **Targets depends on situation analysis: which issues will we pursue? Who wields power and influence? Who proposes? Who decides? Timing?**



Why visit your MP?

- You can accomplish useful aims by meeting any MP.
- Let go of any assumptions and make friends now...
 - MPs who are not currently in cabinet may be in cabinet in the future.
 - The opposition may form government.
- MPs may provide information on how the party caucus views an issue and what obstacles we might need to address to influence government.
- MPs want to get elected.
- They want to make a mark.



What sort of action can MPs take to support campaigns?

- One of the most common actions they can take is to write a letter to a government minister.
- MPs can sign up to parliamentary motions showing support for a particular issue.
- They can ask questions in the House of Commons (esp. issue critics)
- They can challenge bills at Committee (esp. Immigration or CIMM)
- They can show their support in all sorts of ways outside parliament (e.g. write an article in the local newspaper, post an article on their website, highlight a concern in public)
- They can introduce private members bills.



Do I need to be an expert?

- **NO!**
- **Remember: MPs need to keep on top of a wide range of issues. Often you will know more about a particular issue than your MP.**
- **Your MP may be grateful for any information you can provide.**
- **If you are asked a question you can't answer, it's perfectly fine to say you don't know and that you will find the answer for them.**



Does it matter which party my MP belongs to?

- **NO.**
- **The party in power formulates policy but all MPs have influence that they can use in Parliament or in Government.**
- **Should I mention my own political opinions? It's always worth saying if you personally support the MPs' party (however making clear that the campaign is non-partisan, and doesn't support one party or another). Likewise, if you are a "floating" or "undecided" voter, you could hint that the issues you are raising and how parties react to it will influence the way you vote.**



Finding out about your MP

- **Who is your MP? Find out by checking this website: <http://bit.ly/qyxfKQ>**
- **The more you know about your MP the better you can pitch your case – and the more likely he or she is to take action!**
- **Check the MP's website. Look out for:**
 - **whether your MP holds a position in government or in opposition.**
 - **whether he/she sits on a House of Commons committee or all party group**
 - **what did he/she do before becoming an MP?**
 - **does he/she have a personal interest in human rights issues (through perhaps having lived or worked overseas)?**



How to contact your MP

- **All MPs are different and have different ways of organizing their time and their work. But there are general tips to remember:**
- **MPs are very busy. Keep letters, phone calls, emails and meetings short and to the point.**
- **Cultivate a relationship with an MP's staff. They will often be your first and most regular point of contact.**
- **Be polite and courteous. Nothing to be gained from getting your MP annoyed!**
- **Always point out that others in your community share your concerns.**



Meeting your MP in person

- Letters, phone calls, emails can be effective, but nothing makes an impression like a meeting in person.
- Making time for the meeting shows how important the issue is for you.
- Most MPs work from their constituencies each Friday afternoon and sometimes on Saturdays. Call their office to find out when the MP is generally in his/her constituency office and whether you need to book a specific time.
- Recess: Parliament usually isn't in session for one week of every month. MPs are often available for meetings in their constituency offices during that week.
- Summer recess: The exact dates vary but Parliament is usually not sitting from June 20 to September 10th.

Preparing for the meeting

- Make some notes in advance about the key points you want to make.
- Think about counter arguments your MP might have.
- Be as specific as you can (give examples) about the costs of inaction.



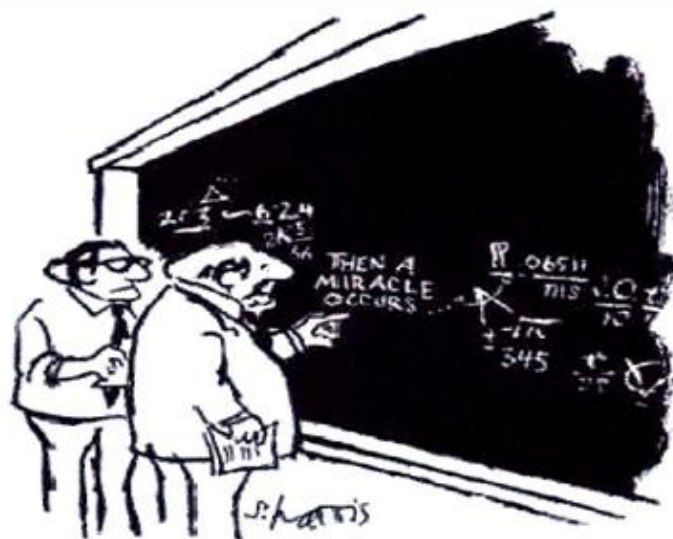


Preparing for the meeting

- Prepare a couple of clear recommendations or asks for your MP.



During the meeting



"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT
HERE IN STEP TWO."

- Be brief. Be clear about the reasons for the meeting. Communicate your key points as clearly as possible.



During the meeting

- **Take notes so you can follow up important points.**
- **Keep the discussion on track! (The MP might change the subject to avoid an issue he or she prefers not to deal with.)**
- **If you're asked a difficult question, don't worry. Offer to find out the response.**
- **Wrap up the meeting reiterating your key points and / or your understanding of the action that you have requested your MP to take.**



After the meeting

- **Follow up with a thank you note.**
- **Include a reminder of the key points raised.**
- **Keep in touch.**
- **Send your MP information, press clippings, online articles or updates that relate to the issues you have discussed.**
- **You might also want to invite the MP to attend an event you are organizing.**



THANK YOU!
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