

Tips for engaging effectively with decision makers

Identify the key decision makers

- Get to know the key players:
 - MPs, MPPs
 - Cabinet ministers
 - Political staff
 - Public servants
 - Deputy ministers
 - Opposition critics
 - Media
 - Other stakeholders
- Do your research to ensure you reach out to the right person for the issue at hand.
- Know the right place to reach them. For example, if you want to talk to your MP/MPP as a constituent, you need to make an appointment to see them in their constituency office. If you want to talk to them because they are a cabinet minister, then you need to make an appointment to see them in their government office.

Build relationships

- Develop a strategy for connecting with and building relationships with the key decision makers your organization has identified:
 - Find commonalities to personalize the relationship
 - Point out the mutual benefits of them supporting you/your cause
 - Ask them to make a personal introduction for you to anyone they think can further the cause
- Position yourself as an ally. Even if you know that the person does not support your organization's position, start by presenting yourself as though you see them as an ally. For example:

"We know you care about keeping women and children in our community/province safe. ..."
- Make sure you know the decision maker's track record on related issues

Engage decision makers

- Follow key decision makers on social media such as Twitter and, when appropriate, like and/or retweet their posts (this includes MPs, MPPs, their chiefs of staff and other key staff members)
- Provide positive feedback for good decisions or public statements the person makes, tying your praise to your organization's work/mandate. For example:

"I commend you for your recent public comments about the CKW inquest. As you stated, the rate of femicide in Ontario is far too high. Implementing the jury's recommendations would help to address this problem. We'd be happy to review key recommendations with you. ..."
- Prepare thoroughly for meetings with decision-makers:
 - Make sure you know the topic you wish to discuss thoroughly, so you can answer any questions the person may have for you
 - Send background materials to their staff person at least one week before the meeting
 - Be respectful of their limited time
 - Keep your presentation short so there is time for discussion
 - Be sure to end your meeting with the specifics of what you want
 - Follow up in writing to thank them for meeting with you, summarize what you discussed, provide anything you said you would, confirm your expectations of them, and put a timeline on when you hope to hear back
 - Be active on social media about your advocacy efforts and where appropriate tag decision makers directly affected
- Know when it is not worth your time to try to persuade someone to support your position
- Remember that government moves slowly: advocacy requires patience and follow-up