



Marking a Century of Women's Suffrage
Commémorer un siècle du droit de vote des femmes

e✓equal voice
✓e À voix égales

116 rue Albert Street, Suite 803
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G3
613.236.0302
info@equalvoice.ca

Making Change: Meeting with Political Representatives

Making Change is a collection of skill-based education modules, created to equip young women for a variety of political engagement.

These toolkits have three objectives:

1. To **engage and educate** women on a variety of issues that affect their daily lives in work and day-to-day
2. To **enable** women across Canada to explore different pathways to make change and engage in politics and policy on these issues
3. To **provide** policy options, strategies for engagement, and tools of empowerment to allow women to participate in the political and policy process in Canada



Who can you - and should - meet

YOUR MP/MLA/MPP/MNA

Always reach out to your specific representative. They are there to represent *you* and therefore have a duty to at least listen to your concerns.

When trying to influence change, try to work with the decision makers who are capable of making that change happen.

CABINET MINISTERS

Go onto the website of the provincial, federal, or territorial government you are trying to influence and take a look at their cabinet ministers. Try just googling “British Columbia cabinet ministers” or “Cabinet Ministers of Newfoundland and Labrador Government”. Read the description of each ministry and determine which ministry or ministries is/are relevant to your cause. For example, if you are calling on the government to improve supports for survivors of domestic violence, you should consider speaking with the Minister for Status of Women, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Public Safety. Consider reaching out to the level of government most responsible for the issue you care about, but it is often the case that provinces/territories *and* the federal government both play a role. Decide if you want to concentrate your efforts or if you want to reach out to the responsible ministers at multiple levels of government.

OPPOSITION CRITICS

You should also reach out to opposition critics about this issue. The Official Opposition will always have a **critic** for each portfolio (another term for Ministry). This is sometimes called a **Shadow Cabinet** and it is composed of **Shadow Ministers**. Shadow Cabinets are a critical component of the system of checks and balances that is integral to our democracy. Critics can play an important role in raising your issue to the Minister in question period, debates on legislation or the budget, with the media or behind the scenes with other key players.

You can find out who the critics or shadow ministers are by looking at the websites of the opposition parties. For example, if you are looking to contact the Shadow Minister federally, type “Shadow Cabinet Conservative Party of Canada” into a search engine. Other opposition that don’t make up the Official Opposition parties will also likely have a representative designated to be a critic of each portfolio. Reach out to these individuals as well.



WORK ACROSS PARTY LINES

It is important to put your own political views aside when taking on the role of an advocate, and work with everyone. You never know who will end up being your biggest advocate and who might form government in the future. Your advocacy work might be a long-haul project that might span one or more elections. Thus, it's important to garner support on both sides of the aisle. For example, if the issue you are addressing falls into the federal Status of Women portfolio, you should get in contact the Hon. Maryam Monsef, Liberal Minister for Status of Women, Rachael Harder, Conservative Opposition Critic for Status of Women, and Sheila Malcolmson, NDP Critic for Status of Women.

MUNICIPAL POLITICS

Don't underestimate the influence that a meeting with a municipal politician (your mayor or a councillor) can have. You can meet with them about issues surrounding your municipality. In addition, even if they are not in a direct position to solve your issue they can provide greater insight or create a faster link to the federal or provincial representative you are looking to meet with. Municipal politicians are usually easier to find and meet in person Furthermore, mayors work in a constant correspondence with other municipalities, provincial governments, and the federal government. Councillors are also often members of provincial and/or federal committees with other representatives. They have connections available that you might not otherwise have access to and they can help further a resolution.

Chief and Band Council: When & Why to engage

*Note some reserves or communities may have rejected the Indian Act form of governance and may use a different governance system or a combination of two systems. For example, they may use hereditary chiefs and the Chief and Council (C&C) system at the same time.

Chief and Council deal with local issues for a reserve area. They are the primary contacts for if you want to address a local issue (on-reserve or in the area). The councillors may have portfolios meaning they are in charge of certain areas (education, finance, etc.). If there is a certain concern you have it would be best to contact the councillor who has that portfolio.

Chief and Council may also be involved in larger political organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and would serve as your local representative. If there is a concern or issue that you care greatly about in the larger organizations such as AFN getting in contact with your C&C is a way to ensure your voice is heard.



How to engage?

Attend C&C meetings if possible. The meetings discuss community events, progress on issues and most meetings are open to community members. Some communities may live stream or record their meetings so you can view them even if you are unable to attend in person. During a question or concerns period you can ask to speak and bring your concerns to the attention of C&C.

If you have a concern or presentation that will take up a longer amount of time you can contact a member of C&C or meeting coordinator (sometimes this is a separate person from the C&C, such as a minutes taker) and request a time to speak within the agenda. If your request is granted you will have a set time to address C&C and the public who attend. Sometimes companies or organizations who are not members of the reserve will conduct presentations in this way (ex. An energy company proposing a plan to install solar panels on reserve).

C&C often have C&C email addresses and phone numbers to contact them with concerns if you are unable to attend meetings. C&C are often at community events so if you wish to more informally ask questions you could ask them during a community event or use this as an opportunity for networking. There may be non-meeting based C&C events such as a swearing in ceremony for new C&C members which is a great way to engage with C&C.

How to get a meeting?

All Parliamentarians, be it provincial or federal, have a generic email address. There is a member of their staff that is responsible for sorting through those emails and forwarding them to the appropriate person. You can find their email, phone number on their page on the House of Commons or provincial/territorial legislature website. **The same is true of your municipal or city council, you can find their email address on the city website.**

When you reach out:

- Be persistent
 - Follow up on your emails
- Be respectful
- State a call to action

Expert tip: When it comes to **federal** representatives, everyone has a generic email address, which takes the form of "firstname.lastname@parl.gc.ca." However, if you type in "firstname.lastname.C1@parl.gc.ca" the email will be sent to the constituency office and is more likely to be seen by a staff member. If you type "firstname.lastname.A1@parl.gc.ca" your letter will be received by someone in the Ottawa office. This is a trick that can circumvent the risk of your email amongst thousands of others in the general inbox.



Tips and tricks for your meeting

Before the Meeting

- Know exactly who you're meeting with.
 - Understand their background. Where did they go to college? What did they do before being elected to public office? Knowing these little details can give you a better sense of who you'll be meeting with. This is especially useful if you can find common ground that you can use to build a relationship with that individual.
- Have your elevator pitch down
 - What is the issue you are addressing?
 - What do you want this person to do about it?
 - What tangible outcomes do you want to result from this meeting?
 - What is the end goal of your advocacy?
- Prepare a list of questions and key points that are relevant to the person you are meeting.
- Prepare any documents or reports you might want to give to the person you are meeting.
- Prepare answers for questions you may be asked

During the Meeting

- Thank the person for meeting with you before and after the meeting.
- Give out subtle compliments. People like to be complimented and it helps break the ice.
- Begin with your elevator pitch and then see if they have any questions for you.

After the Meeting

- Send a follow up email if you discussed working together in the future.
- Keep a working document of meeting notes for you to reference later.