



EXERCISING YOUR VOICE

PREPARING FOR A LOBBY MEETING

The following is a list of handy tips for conducting a lobby meeting with a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) or a Trustee. It is important to remember that while all actions help to make a difference one of the most persuasive forms of lobbying is with a face-to-face meeting; this is why it is important to secure a meeting date.

NOTE: These tips are guidelines that can also be applied to other advocacy and lobby situations where you are seeking to create public policy change.

STEP ONE

Review Your Materials

Before requesting a meeting with the MPP or Trustee, it is important that you review the lobby kit documents to re-familiarize yourself with the purpose and objectives of the meeting.

It might be helpful to make a few notes in case the staff person on the phone seeks additional information about your meeting request.

STEP TWO

Call To Make An Appointment

Call the Constituency Office during office hours to schedule a meeting. Typically the hours are posted on the MPP website. Email can work as a back-up but the first point of contact is best by telephone.

When you call it is important to be polite and direct. During the call confirm the amount of time for the meeting and provide your personal contact information; if the meeting is rescheduled you will want the staff member to connect directly with you.

If you are not able to schedule the meeting on your first attempt be sure to establish a timeframe of when you may be contacted to confirm a meeting date.

Be respectful and professional to the staff member and identify that you are a resident of the riding. It is not necessary at this point to indicate that you are a member of ETFO.

STEP THREE

Establish Contact To Re-Confirm The Meeting

A day or two prior to the meeting follow-up with the Constituency Office to confirm who will be attending the meeting, the topic for discussion, the time of the meeting and reinforce that you are seeking a constructive dialogue with the MPP.

STEP FOUR

Prepare For The Meeting

Refer to the fact sheets and speaking points in your lobby kit. Typically, you will have **half an hour** for the meeting and not much more. Be succinct, direct and personable. Ensure that you make a **direct ask for support** to the representative; the goal is for the MPP or Trustee to take action on the issue.

Consider bringing a parent or community partner with you to the meeting as part of the delegation.

Agree in advance what subjects and points everyone in the delegation will cover. It is recommended that you limit the delegation to a maximum of five people with a maximum of three designated speakers.

STEP FIVE

Establish Roles

In your meeting delegation it is important to have designated roles. For each meeting you should establish a **spokesperson**, a **note-taker** or consider rotating notes for different sections of the meeting, someone to act as a **photographer** to ask and initiate taking a photo and a **timekeeper** to help keep the meeting on track, watch the time and ensure that a direct ask for support is made.



Day of the Lobby Meeting

Meet at least 15 minutes before the meeting

During your pre-meeting review the roles (listed above), objectives and confirm the note-taker.

As a reminder, the note-taker should not have multiple roles because it is vital that any commitments are recorded. The notes will be your record to follow-up on issues after the lobby.

Remember – this person has no more experience than you do and in most cases, they will have less!

Politicians are not experts, they have good staff to supply information but that information is often one-sided. Don't be intimidated; be confident. Talk as you would talk to your neighbour and look them in the eye. Don't be in awe of them and keep it simple.

Confirm who is in the room

Introduce your delegation. Name the area each person lives in, the riding and any relevant group or membership affiliation.

Stay focused on the purpose of the meeting

Avoid long introductions and small talk that will diminish your meeting time. Personal dialogue can be a tactic to avoid meaningful discussion so be certain that your timekeeper helps to redirect and focus the conversation.

During the Lobby Meeting

Provide a copy of the official ETFO lobby kit and a button

Present the lobby kit and leave it behind with the representative to review after the meeting. When discussing information on one of the fact sheets you should also provide a personal story about your direct experience in the classroom and as an educator in Ontario's world-class public education system.

Outline the direct ask for support from the MPP or Trustee

It is perfectly acceptable to take out and review the relevant documents with the person. Read the direct ask for support from the lobby documents.

Find out what they think and listen carefully

Active listening is an essential part of effective advocacy. Observe both what is said and the body language. You will not know what argument will make the most impact unless you find out what their concern or understanding is.

Ask what the MPP or Trustee believes or feels about the cuts to education.

Correct wrong information

Remember, elected officials are busy people and may not be well informed on the issues and/or impacts in the classroom. Share your personal experiences, provide specifics on issues and dispel incorrect information.

Affirm community support to stop the cuts

Reinforce that parents, community members and educators, the voters in their riding, are concerned about cuts to education and the impact on children.

Ask how the MPP or Trustee can justify not representing the will and needs of the constituents that they are elected to serve, including children. Don't be aggressive, but be assertive.

Leave with an understanding of what the MPP/Trustee will do

We want a commitment to take action. Before you leave, repeat back the commitments you understood they made to you or ask what they will do to offer support. Ask how they will show support and when any actions will be taken.

Capture the meeting with a photo

It is important to capture the meeting, regardless if you think the meeting outcome was positive towards ETFO's position.

A photo reinforces the advocacy work that you have done and it is a great visual to use on social media to thank the person for the meeting and re-state the request for support.



After the Lobby Meeting

Write a short message and post the photo on social media

As Canada's largest union of educators, representing more than 83,000 teachers and educational professions, ETFO has name recognition for its social justice work, collective strength and political power. To elevate the positive image of professional educators and ETFO's influence as an informed advocate, social media platforms and online engagement are key strategic tools.

Keep your post short, offer thanks for the meeting and mention any commitments made or what you discussed. Tag the MPP or Trustee to the post.

In political messaging it is important to include how safety, fair hiring, class sizes and the education funding cuts impact specific marginalized communities especially racialized people and women.

Participate and expand the conversation with your message by including a hashtag in your post. Hashtags are keywords that allow users to share posts or tweets on the same topic easily. This will also help other users on Twitter to see your post and comment.

Recommended hashtags to use are:

#ETFO
#OntEd
#ONpoli
#CutsHurtKids

We would recommend that each post include a maximum of three hashtags.

Email notes/report to the provincial office

Be sure to complete the short, report-back form and email it along with when a follow-up should occur.

Email the report to communications@etfo.org.

Write a letter

The written letter can be issued by email and should also be sent as a hard copy with your signature via postal mail.

The purpose of the letter is to confirm the discussion, any agreements and assert the call for support. State the following:

- ETFO's position;
- Who was present at the meeting;
- Any follow-up questions or issues raised during the meeting that you are seeking an answer to;
- Reiterate what commitments or action that you are looking for; and
- Establish a timeframe for follow-up and provide your contact information.

Keep any commitments that you made

If you promised to send the politician additional information do so immediately after your meeting. Don't delay.

Report back to your base

Keep the local executive/membership, activists and community partners in the loop about the meeting and any developments.

