

ADVOCACY 101

Advocating for an issue or positive change in your community.

CONNECT	<p>Talk to your neighbours and others who may be impacted by the issue, or who may want a similar change. It is best to have an open conversation – let everyone express themselves freely, rather than starting out with a rigid position.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Talk to your neighbours and ask them to talk to neighbours – spread the news through word of mouth. Include the natural connectors – the neighbours who know everyone and know all the news. -Knock on doors. -Drop off a neighbourhood leaflet -Meet informally (kitchen table meeting; neighbourhood potluck; café; library meeting room)
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FIND THE LAY OF THE LAND	<p>Find out the status of this issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have any groups advocated on or researched this issue? -Are there existing City initiatives, positions, policies or by-laws? -What's the public opinion? -Who can you reach out to for support? Who might join or support your effort? -Who will oppose you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reach out to groups who are knowledgeable on the issue. They will have lots of information to share. -Research
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IDENTIFY THE DECISION YOU WANT	<p>You know the outcome you want – now you need to translate that into a specific ask. Do you need a policy change? A specific outcome for a Council vote? Choose carefully.</p> <p>Now identify the decision maker. Who has the power to make the decision?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reach out to groups who are knowledgeable on the issue. They will have lots of information to share. -Research -Be strategic. Be principled. -Believe in the change you want.
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YOUR MESSAGE	<p>Craft your message. Be clear and accurate. Don't exaggerate. Keep to the high ground. Think of 3 different ways to get your message across: different things will resonate with different people. E.g. data based decisions; social impact, environmental impact, economic impact, personal story telling and experience.</p>	<p>-You want your message to be heard from many sources: meetings, phone calls, media coverage, social media, letter/e-mails, letter to the editor, petition. In terms of impact phone calls>letters>e-mails>petitions.</p> <p>Remember you can work on 1 specific issue but still tell the story of the bigger picture of what you are working towards.</p>
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WORK IN COMMUNITY	<p>Many voices are stronger than a single voice. Be genuine about who you represent.</p>	<p>-Come together to speak as a group -Work with like-minded groups for joint or coordinated messaging and actions -Get the support of community leaders</p>
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EDUCATION & AWARENESS	<p>Education and awareness is essential groundwork. Get your message out. Be heard. The more people hear your message, the more familiar it becomes, and the more general support you can garner. Make it part of the civic dialogue – you want to hear other people (especially decision makers), talking about it and repeating your messages. Be a powerful influence. I.e. make it important for decision makers to listen to you.</p>	<p>There are many tactics you could use: neighbourhood newsletters, media releases or press conferences, letters to the editor, information primers to decision makers, petitions, protests, street theatre or street art, public meetings.</p>
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<p>USE THE PROPER CHANNELS</p>	<p>Take the steps available to you. This will vary depending on the issue and what change you are trying to effect.</p> <p>By following the proper channels, you can gain the sympathy of the public, press and community leaders (with the help of the education and awareness you've already done).</p> <p>Sometimes, there are several steps. I.e. if you don't get the outcome you want in the first step, you can escalate to the next one.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reach out to groups who are knowledgeable on the issue, as well as to sympathetic councillor(s) and the city clerk to find out what the available channels are -Be strategic. There may be more than 1 channel, so be strategic in your choice. -Do your due diligence. If you are relying on a Council vote, gain the support of 7+ councillors beforehand -When decision time comes, show your strength. Fill council chambers. Make sure many calls/e-mails are coming in. Be in the media.
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If the outcome is successful – congratulations! Be sure to celebrate your success, and share with others so they can learn from your experience.

If the outcome was not successful, and there is no further recourse, know that your efforts have still contributed to a better community. And take advantage of the new connections you have made in your community.

If the outcome was not successful, it is within the power of decision makers to change the decision, and you want to continue the fight, it is time for the next step.



<p>PRESSURE DECISION MAKERS</p>	<p>Show your strength. Become a 'credible threat'. In other words, make it imperative that they listen to you.</p> <p>Be persistent.</p> <p>If you have perceived 'opponents', don't make it personal. Keep to the high ground.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue to make sure that the decision makers are hearing from many people and groups directly and in the media. -You may need to use a dramatic action to show a high level of public support (but make sure that if you organize an action, you know for sure that it will demonstrate lots of public support!). -If there is someone 'inside' who is supportive, find out if/how they may be able to exert pressure from inside. Always respect the confidentiality and limits of inside supporters.
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NEGOTIATE	<p>Most simply, they may revisit the decision, and you may get a second chance at a vote.</p> <p>Or, they may negotiate with you.</p> <p>Tactics they may use are: strategic delays, evade responsibility, take care of a symptom (not root problem), divide & conquer, offer concessions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Maintain your solidarity as a group.-Speak as a united voice.-Be strategic in what concessions you accept, if any.-Continue to have a strong show of public support.
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HOLD STRONG OR SETTLE	<p>If you hold on, you may achieve a new vote with a different outcome, or a way for decision makers to meet your demands in a way that is positive for them.</p> <p>At some point, you may need to decide to settle for a smaller step forward, and maintain your energy for another day.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Maintain your solidarity as a group.-Be strategic in what concessions you accept, if any-Be clear about the bigger picture you are working towards: smaller steps can be stepping stones. You are helping lay the groundwork for future efforts.-Celebrate your efforts.-Keep the strength and support of the networks and allies you have formed through your efforts.
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With recognition for lessons learned from Joan Kuyek and Brennain Lloyd.

N.B. This information is intended for the context of advocating within an existing framework, as opposed to mobilizing for systemic change.

Prepared by: Coalition for a Liveable Sudbury www.liveablesudbury.org