



HOW TO GUIDE FOR ENGAGING YOUR GOVERNMENT

- ✓ The different levels of government & what can they do for you
- ✓ How to find your MP or government official
- ✓ Different ways to approach your government
- ✓ What to prepare before you make contact

While being active with public activities and getting media attention will help bring the issues of cluster bombs and landmines to the attention of government officials, you can also contact them directly in a few ways to let them know your views and concerns.

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT & WHAT CAN THEY DO FOR YOU

There are different levels of government that you can approach depending on what you are trying to achieve and who has the power to make it happen. Depending on your goal, you may decide to engage one group over the other or you may decide to engage all of them.

Below are the different levels of government and the pros & cons of engaging them:

1) *The Prime Minister*

- + The Prime Minister has full power to make decisions and impose them.
- The Prime Minister is not very accessible and may not pay attention to your issue unless it is relevant to his current focus.

2) *Ministers*

- + Ministers are responsible for making and recommending decisions specific to their area of focus (e.g. foreign affairs or defense).
- As representatives of the Prime Minister, they are less likely to stray too far from current government priorities and policies.

3) *Members of Parliament (MPs) & Senators*

- + MPs and Senators are very accessible to the public and are mandated to represent constituents' concerns to Parliament and the government.
- They have no formal power over policy decisions but can use their power informally in caucuses, parliament, standing committees and private members' bills to bring constituent issues of concern to key decision makers.

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

In Canada, you can find contact information for:

- Your **MP** by going to www.parl.gc.ca and typing in your postal code.
- **Senators** in your area by going to www.parl.gc.ca and clicking on "Senators". Once there, you can see which Senators are in your area by clicking the tab to sort by "Province".
- **Ministers** by going to www.parl.gc.ca and clicking on "The Canadian Ministry (Current)".
- The **Prime Minister** by going to <http://www.pm.gc.ca> and clicking on "Contact".

DIFFERENT WAYS TO APPROACH YOUR GOVERNMENT

There are several different ways you can let your government hear your voice on this issue:

- Send an email, letter or fax detailing your concerns and the actions you want taken.

- Book a face to face meeting with your MP or local Senator. Go alone or with other constituents to discuss your concerns.
- Call and let your concerns and request for action known to staffers. Also take the opportunity to ask about the official position on the issue.
- Sign and collect signatures for the People's Treaty to ban cluster bombs which will be used to pressure governments around the world to ratify the new Convention on Cluster Munitions as quickly as possible so that it becomes binding, international law. It takes 30 countries to ratify before this happens – help us make sure Canada is one of them.

WHAT TO PREPARE BEFORE YOU MAKE CONTACT

Before you make contact with your government official – whether by email, phone or in person – it is useful to prepare yourself ahead of time by outlining a short case statement:

- **Background:** 3-5 paragraphs on the facts and history of the problem
- **Core issues:** One page concisely detailing what the main areas of concern are currently and why it needs to be addressed now.
- **Recommendations:** Specifically what action is being requested and how it will address the problem.

To help you prepare, the MAC website contains ready-made and adaptable PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets, photos and ideas for action. Go to the “**Act**” section of www.minesactioncanada.org to check for the latest updates.

This case statement can become the basis for an email or letter to your government official or a briefing note that you can take to your meeting to help you make your points.

Sample case statement:

October 31st, 2006

BACKGROUND

Cluster munitions include cargo containers and submunitions. Fired, launched or dropped by aircraft or land-based artillery, the containers open and disperse bomblets or submunitions over a wide area, often resulting in very dense contamination. The bomblets are designed to pierce armour and can kill anyone within a range of 50 meters with its explosive lethal charge. A single cluster bomb strike can spread hundreds to thousands of bomblets over as much as one square kilometer - with no distinction between military or civilian targets. Cluster munitions also have a failure rate ranging from 5-30%. Those that do not explode on impact become explosive remnants of war. These ‘dud’ munitions become defacto landmines and must be treated and cleared as such. Throughout 2001-2002, 1,228 cluster bombs containing 248,056 submunitions were used in Afghanistan.¹ In 2003, 13,000 cluster munitions containing an estimated 1.8 to 2 million submunitions were used in Iraq.²

The Canadian Forces possess a small stock of M483A1 155mm artillery projectiles containing 88 M42/M64 DPICM grenades that they have never used. Canada announced in August 2005 that it has retired and will destroy its inventory of Rockeye cluster bombs but its completion has not been confirmed.

Mines Action Canada has called for a moratorium on the use of cluster munitions since 2000 because of the harm they have caused to civilian populations in at least 24 countries.

¹ Mark Hiznay, Human Rights Watch; PowerPoint presentation *Cluster Munitions: A Global Overview*.

² Ibid.

MAIN ISSUES

For 40 years, cluster munitions have proven to cause significant harm to civilians both during the initial strikes because they are designed to strike over a large surface area and afterwards due to high failure rates of the bomblets, which then become defacto landmines. Lebanon is only the most recent example of the severe humanitarian consequences of using this weapon with up to three people killed or injured by clusters each day since the conflict ended – a third of them children³. Also, during this recent conflict was the first time use of cluster munitions by a non-state armed group, Hezbollah, was confirmed⁴, which has sparked concerns about the possible proliferation of this weapon. Clusters have been on the international agenda for over 30 years but states have failed to establish a legally binding instrument to address the humanitarian concerns. Over 73 countries, including Canada, stockpile cluster munitions and it is estimated that these stockpiles contain over a billion submunitions. If nothing is done to stop cluster munitions from being used in the future, the contamination caused by these submunitions will far surpass the levels of contamination from landmines.

From November 6th-17th, Canada attended the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The CCW is the UN body responsible for banning or restricting the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately. This is the same UN body that failed to adequately address the landmine issue ten years ago and provoked Canada to challenge the rest of the world to step outside the CCW and create a new international treaty banning landmines. As a result of this “outside the box” Canadian leadership, the landmine treaty (or Ottawa Treaty as it is commonly known) became the most rapidly ratified disarmament treaty in history. Because of the significant cluster use in the recent Lebanon-Israel conflict, cluster munitions dominated the CCW agenda over the past two weeks. The most significant development of this Review Conference was that, in the space of two weeks, support for negotiations of an international treaty on cluster munitions grew exponentially from six to more than thirty states including support for a freeze on clusters by the United Nations Secretary General. At the end of the CCW, Norway announced its decision to start a process on a new treaty to ban cluster munitions.

Canada was not among these states instead making a statement only in support of continuing more discussions on clusters and other weapons within the CCW. Given what we have seen of the efforts of this forum on this issue in the past, the assertion that governments are working on this issue through the CCW must be seen for what it is – an inadequate response to a consistent pattern of harm.

Canada also failed to be among those states that acceded to the Convention of Conventional Weapons Protocol V addressing post-conflict clean up of explosive remnants of war, such as failed cluster munitions, which entered into force on November 13th 2006⁵.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On behalf of its 40 plus member organizations working in mine action, peace, development and human rights, Mines Action Canada is asking Canada to:

- Join the leadership group of 30+ countries working to create a new treaty on clusters;
- Declare a moratorium on the use, production, trade, transfer, or procurement of cluster munitions until the humanitarian concerns about them are addressed;

3 Foreseeable Harm: The Impact of Cluster Munitions in Lebanon 2006

4 Human Rights Watch, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/10/18/lebano14412.htm>

5 Human Rights Watch Memorandum for Delegates to the Fourteenth Session of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts, June 2006.

- Complete destruction of the cluster munitions in its arsenal which are known to be inaccurate and unreliable;
- Ensure policy coherence so that we do not only fund post-conflict clearance, risk education and victim assistance, but that we also support effective efforts to prevent the predictable humanitarian harm caused by cluster munitions; and
- Ratify CCW's Protocol V on the clean-up of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and be the first country to announce new and additional funding to implement our obligations under this Protocol.

For more information contact Mr. Paul Hannon, Executive Director, at info@minesactioncanada.org or 613 241 3777.

How to Guide content adapted from:

- Aaron Freeman, part-time faculty member of the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, and co-author of *The Laws of Government: The legal foundations of Canadian democracy*.
- The International Campaign to Ban Landmines Campaign Kit (<http://www.icbl.org/resources/campaignkit/>)