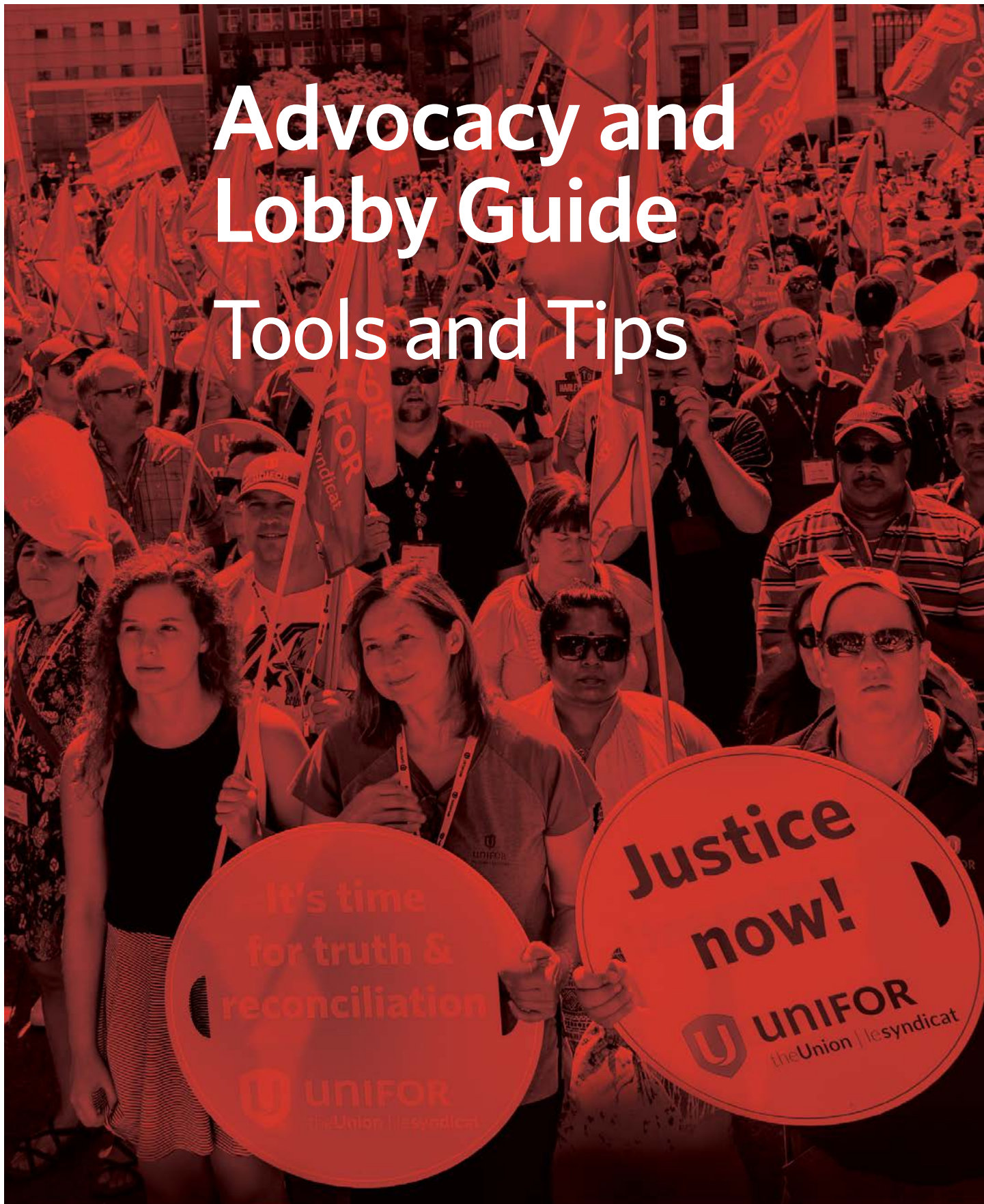


# Advocacy and Lobby Guide Tools and Tips



**Political Action**  
**Action politique**

# Message from the President



We are the largest private sector union in Canada and are proud to be part of the larger labour movement. In addition to our unwavering commitment to fighting for our members' rights in the workplace, Unifor is a union that agitates for broader social change.

The principle of "social unionism" was enshrined in our founding documents. Our role is to be a powerful voice and tireless advocate for progressive public policies and social programs. Through the growing work of activists in Unifor our union is part of an international movement for justice and social change.

Meeting in person and lobbying government officials is an important tool (and not the only one at our disposal) for achieving political change. Unifor is committed to building the capacity of local unions by training members to be effective advocates for themselves, their union, and their community. This Advocacy and Lobbying Guide contains tools and tips to assist you with creating change in your community. There are resources on how to develop a lobbying strategy, prepare for government meetings, make persuasive arguments, and tactics to keep the pressure on. These same skills you can use at all three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal, all it takes is minor modifications to account for the different decision-making structures.

I trust you will find this information helpful in your ongoing responsibilities as a trade unionist. I know you will work to represent Unifor and make us proud by being an agent of positive change. Together we can and we must fight for a better world – so stay active!

For more information on Unifor's campaigns and ways to get involved, please contact our national Membership Mobilization and Political Action Department at [politicalaction@unifor.org](mailto:politicalaction@unifor.org) or visit [unifor.org/action](http://unifor.org/action).

In solidarity,

Jerry Dias  
National President



## Tools and Tips

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**You don't have to be an expert on issues to lobby a politician.**



## Advocacy and lobbying: an overview

### What is it?

Advocacy or lobbying is the process of trying to influence decision makers so that they do what we would like them to do. It is as old as politics itself, and just as legitimate. If you've ever doubted whether lobbying can make a difference, just look at what the labour movement has accomplished in the last few years on Parliament Hill and at City Halls across this country. We've achieved the Wage Earners Protection Program in cases of bankruptcy, made improvements to federal regulations on violence in the workplace and on ergonomic issues, via Bill S-221 we achieved legal protections for transit drivers assaulted at work and we held our ground on labour legislation, even though the Harper Conservatives were on the attack (Bills 377, 525 and C-4). The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) adopted our pension resolution and we expanded our relationships and our reach at the Municipal level.

We have really kept the issues of labour rights, minimum wage, child care, EI, trade and anti-scab legislation (just to name a few) prominently in the minds of the politicians working together with community allies and labour councils, federations of labour and the Canadian Labour Congress. Imagine what we will be able to achieve in the next four years.

### Why do we lobby?

Politicians often have little or no knowledge of the range of opinions on issues, or why we take the positions we do. This makes it crucial that our lobbying provide a counter-balance to the lobbying efforts of the corporate sector and the constant business-oriented media barrage that politicians are influenced by. Politicians must be given the opportunity to understand our views. They must come to respect the fact that union activists are not only representing the best interests of workers and speaking on their behalf, but that we are also taxpayers and consumers, we live in communities and we vote.

### You don't have to be an 'expert'

You don't have to be an expert on issues to lobby a politician. Concentrate more on the effect of the issue in your community. Stick to the community side of the issue, because that's the area where you are the expert.

### The politician

Many people believe politicians know more than they do or they wouldn't be in decision-making positions. They think they aren't articulate enough or that they'll freeze up when they approach the politicians; maybe they'll be asked questions they can't answer.

Often we forget that a politician's job is to serve us. That's why they were elected to office. We forget that it's us, the voters, who hold the power.

Experienced lobbyists will tell us that once you start meeting the politicians you'll see the mystique that surrounds them dissolve. They're just ordinary people who come from a variety of backgrounds. And they're always responsive to the voters – the people who can affect their future.

The question is how do we get our Unifor members to talk to politicians about issues that affect them and our membership? Our opposition has the money and the media but we have the numbers to make a difference.

### Your lobby team

You don't need to go alone. Often, it's better to meet with politicians as a team. Before you go into the lobby meeting, make sure the team decides:

- 1 Who will be the spokesperson;
- 2 Who will ask each of the questions; and
- 3 Who will be the lobby note-taker.

The lobby note-taker is responsible for filling out the 'Lobby Report' and sending it back to Unifor's Membership Mobilization and Political Action Department at [politicalaction@unifor.org](mailto:politicalaction@unifor.org)

### Meeting a politician

For some people, making the phone call to the politician's office to set up a meeting is not difficult. The person who is responsible for setting up the meeting is the assistant. Sometimes when you phone for a meeting, the assistant will ask a lot of questions, get into a debate about the issue and try to discourage you from asking for a meeting. Sometimes they will say they will schedule a meeting, but give you no firm commitment.

As a voter, you have the right to meet with your elected representative.



## Try a few of these tips

As a constituent, ask for a meeting with your local representative. When asked the nature of the meeting, give a short answer such as: *"I wish to speak to the Minister, MP, MPP/MLA/MHA or Councillor/Mayor about retirement security and pensions. I represent many workers in this riding/district/ward/city and would like to discuss some specific things with the Minister, MP, MPP/MLA/MHA or Councillor/Mayor."*

If the minister's assistant tries to discourage you, or even change your mind about asking for a meeting, do not engage in a debate or discussion.

Advise the assistant that you want to speak with your political representative – in person.

If necessary, remind the assistant that, as a voter, you have the right to meet with your elected representative.

Press for a commitment on a date and time convenient to you.

Follow-up with the politician's office staff to ensure that you get a meeting.

Confirm the meeting a few days before you attend.

If you cannot get a meeting, e-mail the politician directly or phone their other office.

Remember, if you are a constituent, you have a right to meet with your local politician at her/his office (federal and provincial politicians are usually home Friday's and weekends). That's why it is always important to have one or more members who live in the ward/city to be part of the lobby you or your union local arranges. Once the assistant confirms the meeting, say how many people will accompany you.

## Planning the meeting

- **Arrange a pre-lobby meeting.** Members of the lobby delegation should have a prior meeting to discuss what you're going to say (your message box). Decide what you want to discuss and the points you want to make.
- **Practice making your pitch.** Know your audience. Remind your representative that "your issue" affects many of her/his constituents. Some politicians will be genuinely interested; others will be preoccupied with their own interests.
- **Stick to your subject!** Your goal is to persuade others to support your position. Know your subject. Speak about what you know (your own story is best) and how it affects your co-workers and community. Anticipate questions and arguments and be prepared to respond.
- **Don't be afraid to say you don't know the answer.** Offer to get back with information and be sure you follow through. Be clear and concise. Don't try to cover too much ground. Confine your comments to specific issues. Explain your position and don't assume everyone understands your point of view. Speak confidently and persuasively. Be a good Listener. Try to determine areas of agreement.
- **Avoid arguments and don't lecture.** If the politician favours your position, ask for help in identifying and persuading others in their caucus or at the city council.
- **Leave the door open.** Try to prevent outright rejection of your position. Emphasize your areas of agreement, not your differences.
- **Don't be discouraged by failure.** Not everyone will be sympathetic or supportive. Don't allow an early failure to stop you from continuing to lobby.

Communicate with your membership about your meeting, expectations and outcomes.



## Lobby day checklist

### Before the meeting

- Read the issue document and backgrounders.
- Bring any materials you'd like the politicians to have to the meeting (these are called the *leave behinds*).
- Meet 15 minutes before the appointment time at a location near the politician's office.
- Make sure you know who will take the lead and who will write the Lobby Report.
- Establish when other lobby group members will add comments or answer questions.

### At the meeting

- Introduce yourself.
- Make a statement of your position.
- Discussion, clarification, response to questions.
- Make commitments to follow-up, if necessary.
- Say thank you and good-bye.

## At the meeting

### Pointers for discussion

- **Talk from your own experience** as a worker. Stick to what you know.
- **Always offer to follow-up if you're asked a question you can't answer.** Then make sure you get back to the politician with the information (always note this down, so that Unifor staff know exactly what is being requested. Send requests to [politicalaction@unifor.org](mailto:politicalaction@unifor.org)).
- **Try to maintain control of the meeting.** Don't get sidetracked; stick to the issue at hand (Politicians often try to tell you stories which eats up your time).
- **Know what you're going to say** and what you want (the "Ask") from the politician. Review and practice your notes.
- **Try to get a commitment** from the politician by the end of the meeting. Ask her/him if they will support the issue/policies you have outlined. Ask him or her to talk to other politicians on the issue.
- **Get a picture with the politician** on your smart phone (for tweets, for union newsletter, etc).



Stick to the community side of the issue, because that's the area where you are the expert.







## After the meeting

### Follow-up

- 1 Sit down and talk about what was said during the meeting. Decide what follow-up action is required and who will do it. If you need help contact the National Membership Mobilization and Political Action Department.
- 2 Fill out your **Lobby Report form** right away. The form is available online at [uniforvotes.ca/tools](http://uniforvotes.ca/tools). Send it to Unifor's Membership Mobilization and Political Action Department at the union's National Office: [politicalaction@unifor.org](mailto:politicalaction@unifor.org). Please cc your staff representative.
- 3 Communicate with your membership about your meeting, expectations and outcomes.
- 4 Encourage co-workers to phone the politician if you are not satisfied with the meeting.
- 5 Send a thank you letter promptly to the politician. Include any additional information you may have promised and repeat your main 'Ask'.
- 6 Set up another meeting, if necessary.

The form is titled "Unifor Lobby Report Form" and includes sections for "Meeting Information", "Political Party Information", and a list of questions to be answered. The questions include: "How did the meeting go?", "Did the politician make any commitments to you?", "Have there been any particular strengths, improvements or concerns made by the politician that should be followed up on?", "What follow-up is required?", "Has the politician shown a willingness to call their own National President or Leadership to help with the request?", and "Is there any other information you would like to share with Unifor's Political Action Department?".

## For more information contact:

Unifor Membership Mobilization and Political Action Department

[politicalaction@unifor.org](mailto:politicalaction@unifor.org)

(416) 497-4110

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