



# Meet your MP

A National Farmers Union Guide  
for democratic engagement



# Why meet in person?

- To inform Members of Parliament about the issue
- To provide the perspective of family farmers
- To highlight the consequences for local constituents (voters)
- To persuade the MP to stand with us



# Setting up a meeting

Organize small group of 3 to 5 individuals from your riding to meet with the MP.

Phone or visit MP's Constituency Office to request a meeting. Contact info is on the House of Commons website – see

<http://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>

Be prepared to provide your names and the purpose of meeting when setting date and time with MP



# Prepare for your meeting

## Learn about the issue

- See the NFU website for the latest information

## Focus on

- Implications for farmers and rural communities
- Implications for agriculture and the food system



# Prepare for your meeting

Learn about MP's party's current position on the issue

- Go to the Party's website to see if they have any statements posted there

Learn about your MP's current position on the issue

- Check their website and social media accounts to see what they have said about it
- Search the Debates (Hansard) for your MPs statements about the issue

<http://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/PublicationSearch?PubType=37>



# Prepare for your meeting

Meet as a group ahead of time to brainstorm questions and ideas for how to best communicate with the MP.

Share insights and experience to ensure you use the strengths of all group members.

Develop list of questions that link the issue to a specific situation in your riding.

Make copies of NFU material to leave with the MP.



# MP's job is to meet with you

MPs work for you!

Be courteous; don't threaten or get defensive

This is an opportunity for them to understand our views

We're also taxpayers, consumers, community residents and voters.



# MP's job is to meet with you

Our point of view is not an imposition

It is the MP's duty to know diverse opinions of constituents AND to be familiar with all sides of issue

Avoid party politics; don't make an issue of political party affiliation





# When you meet ...

Know the issue

Know what you want them to do

Be early

Be friendly, polite and patient

Be personal



# Know the issue

Be clear about the points you want to make

Be clear about what you want your MP to do

Use NFU briefing notes

Politicians may know only party position BUT ...  
***you can provide them details...***



# Tell your personal story

**Personal stories are powerful tools for change**

***Personal stories are important, memorable and persuasive.***

Talk about why and how the matter at hand is important to you;

Describe how the government's action on this issue would affect you, your family, your farm and your community



# Know what you want

Be up front, clear about what you want:

get the MP to make a commitment

**or**

explain clearly why they will not

Information gathered here will help us plan next steps



# Be friendly, polite and patient

## Remember your objectives

- Don't get sidetracked or interrupt when MP is speaking
- Gently persist to ensure your issues are discussed



# Be early

MPs are busy; schedule fills up quickly.

While you wait ...

- Collect your thoughts
- Organize your materials
- Observe the office atmosphere



# Be personal

Our biggest assets are personal experience and opinion

Meeting your MP is chance to make a strong impression on decision-makers.

It's a good sign if the MP takes our issue personally.

Remember (and note) positions and rationale – especially if we should meet the MP again.



# The ASK

**The MOST important thing is:**

**What do you want the MP to DO?**

Make sure your action request is clear

**Make the ASK in every meeting with your MP**

*... and write down the MP's responses.*





# During the meeting

Listen carefully; don't argue

Keep things friendly.

Make the visit memorable.

Say thank you.



# Listen carefully; don't argue

Politicians may want to dominate the conversation

Be polite; try to keep the focus on your issue.

If you do not have an answer to a question they ask, promise to get the answer to them



# Keep things friendly

Don't create enemies!

Maintain positive relationships with legislators— they may be in this office or a higher one for decades.

Avoid threats; hostile or sarcastic remarks



# Take notes

Good notes are **VERY important** for follow-up and debriefing.

Make sure one person in your group takes primary responsibility for note-taking, including

- Names of assistants and others in the room
- Commitments made (or reasons why not)
- Questions asked, concerns raised
- Any questions that you were unable to answer (for follow-up)



# Make the visit memorable

Take a group photo with the MP

Leave tokens such as pins or buttons.

Leave print materials about your concerns

Thank them for the visit



# Thank you

Send a thank you note

Personalize the note and end with reminder of their commitment to action; urge them to follow through.

If you are in a position to, offer a follow up visit or activity to reinforce the meeting's message.



# Debrief

Talk with your team members immediately after the meeting and discuss:

- What went well

- What needs improvement

- What to do in future meetings

Take notes on debriefing session

Share your notes with others working on the campaign so we can build on your results



# Follow up

Make sure your MP honours the commitments made

Follow up with phone call or email if you don't hear anything in a week or so

Send them a photo from meeting along with a note reminding them of any commitments made

Tell others about your experience.





# Repeat!

That first meeting opens the door to a relationship that will help promote our position. You can become your MP's "go to" person on farm issues by ...

- ... Making sure all info you provide is 100% correct and verifiable – this ensures you will be considered a trustworthy source

- ... Suggesting questions (and answers) for your MP to use during Question Period.

- ... Set up more meetings whenever your MP will be in the riding



# Share what you learned

Send an email or phone the NFU office, a Board member or campaign committee member to let them know how your meetings went. Let them know

- Which MP(s) you met with (and any staff present)
- What commitments they made (or reasons for not making any)
- Questions they asked
- Concerns they raised
- Arguments for or against our position on the issue
- Your ideas for next steps with this MP (or others)



# Questions?

For more information contact ...

... the NFU National Office

(306) 652-9465; ask for Cathy

Email [holtslander@nfu.ca](mailto:holtslander@nfu.ca)

or Cam Goff, VP Policy

(306) 544-2790 – Cam Goff

Email [c.b.goff@sasktel.net](mailto:c.b.goff@sasktel.net)

or visit the NFU website at [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca)