

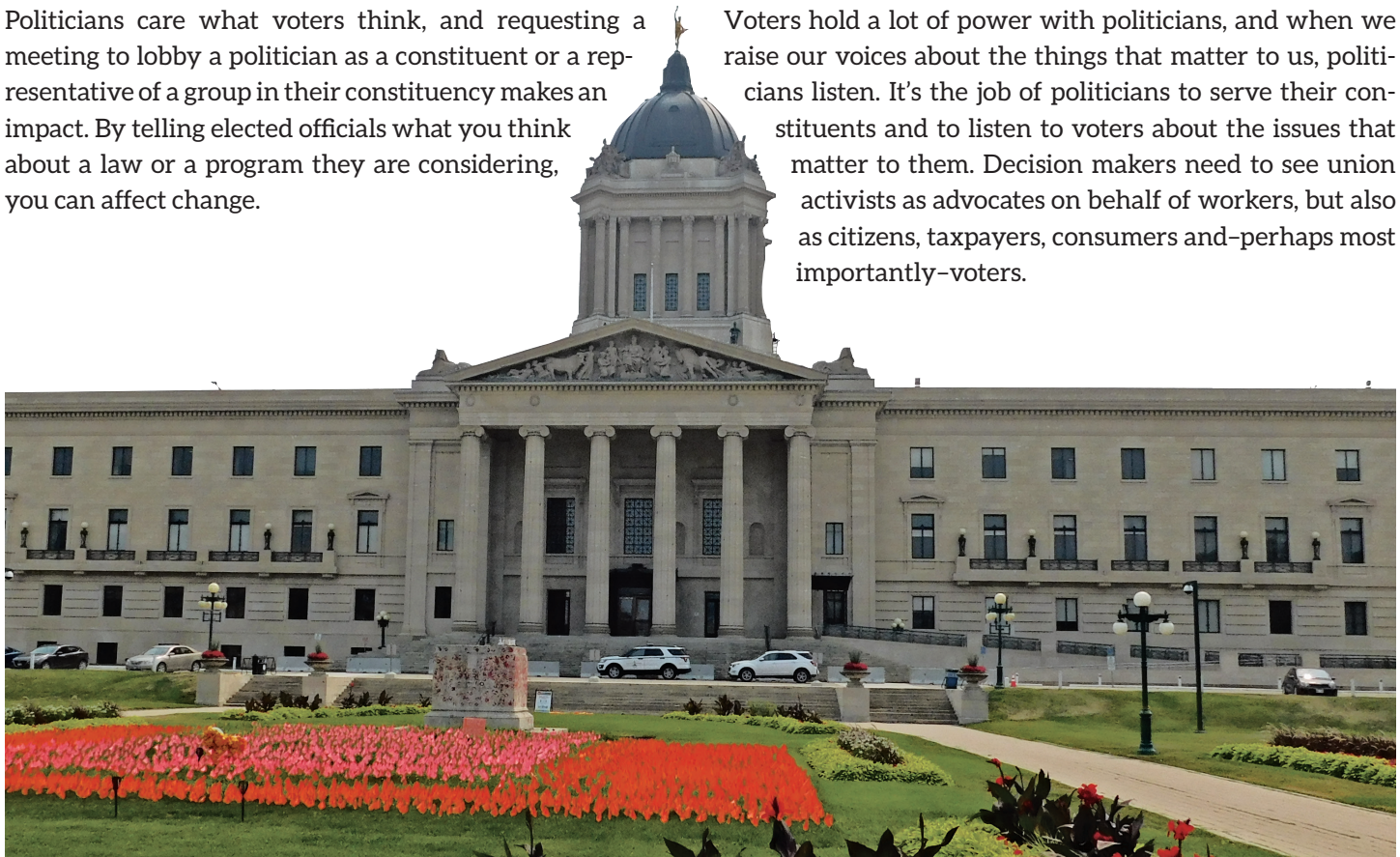
HOW TO LOBBY FOR CHANGE

Lobbying meetings are an important part of any campaign to influence government actions, legislation, and/or funding decisions. Face-to-face (or virtual face-to-face) meetings with constituents and interest groups can make a real impact on elected officials. Often, lobbying is employed as one part of a broader strategy to raise awareness about an issue (and can be combined with public advertising, social and traditional media products, and other strategies to raise public interest in an issue).

Politicians care what voters think, and requesting a meeting to lobby a politician as a constituent or a representative of a group in their constituency makes an impact. By telling elected officials what you think about a law or a program they are considering, you can affect change.

You don't need to be a policy expert or a professional lobbyist to influence politicians and their staff. You just need to show that you are connected to the people and the communities that politicians need to represent (and who they rely on for votes at election time). Speaking from your own experience can be one of the most powerful lobbying tools at your disposal. Union activists are experts on workers and workplaces, and also provide essential perspectives as working people in their communities.

Voters hold a lot of power with politicians, and when we raise our voices about the things that matter to us, politicians listen. It's the job of politicians to serve their constituents and to listen to voters about the issues that matter to them. Decision makers need to see union activists as advocates on behalf of workers, but also as citizens, taxpayers, consumers and—perhaps most importantly—voters.





Workers and unions are fundamental parts of our communities in Manitoba. And it is important for workers and union activists to talk to elected officials. While employers have the deep pockets to pay for professional lobbyists and media influence, unions and workers have the numbers and grassroots outreach to make sure our voices are heard by elected officials. We have strength in numbers!

This guide has been created to give you some practical tips on ways that you can lobby elected officials in your community about things that matter to you, your neighbours and coworkers, and your union.

▶ How to set up a meeting

Setting up a meeting with a politician is easier than you think. We suggest that you **phone their constituency office to set up the meeting**. Their assistant will likely an-



swer the phone, and you should be prepared to answer questions like who you are and what you are calling about. Be firm in requesting a meeting.

Elections Manitoba is a great resource to find out who represents you at the Manitoba Legislature (electionsmanitoba.ca) and to track down their contact information. You can find your MLA by going to: electionsmanitoba.ca/en/Voting/MyVotingInfo.

▶ Here are some tips to remember:

Ask for the meeting as a constituent. If you do not live in the politician's constituency, you can request a meeting as a representative of workers who the politician represents but it will be more likely that a politician will agree to meet if one of their constituents is involved.

When you are asked about the nature of your meeting request, just say that you are speaking as a constituent concerned about an issue or that you are speaking as a representative of workers in the politician's constituency about an issue that matters to them.

▶ Meeting checklist



Unions will often have key information on topics relevant to workers, so get in touch with your union to see if they have information that can help you prepare your arguments. Prior to the meeting, read any issue documents or backgrounders that have been provided by your union.

Make sure you bring any 'leave behind' documents with you, essentially a short summary document of your position. This is something that you can type up yourself, or

something that your union might have on hand (such as a fact sheet or information card).



If you are meeting as a group, gather together 15 minutes ahead of time, close to the meeting location so you can make sure you are all on the same page. Make sure to identify a lead person for the meeting.

▶ At the meeting

Introduce yourselves.

Make a short statement about your position on the issue.

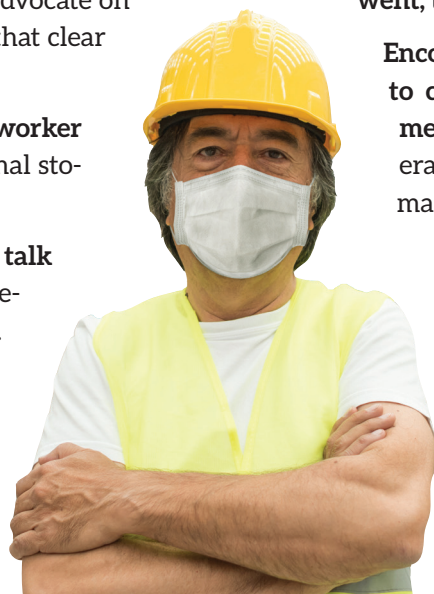
If you have a specific request of the politician (such as wanting them to vote a certain way, advocate on your behalf, present a petition) make that clear from the start.

Speak from your own experience as a worker or a representative of workers. Personal stories can be very powerful.

Stick to the issues you are there to talk about. Even if the conversation gets side-tracked, bring it back to the main issue.

Make sure to ask the elected official what their stance is on the issue.

Try to get a commitment from the elected representative before the meeting ends. Be clear with what



you are asking for, and be up front about meeting again, follow up, etc.

Make sure to thank the elected official and the staff for setting up the meeting. Leave your contact information with the politician and their staff.

▶ After the meeting / Follow up

Sit down together and talk about how the meeting went, what was said, etc. Decide if there are any action items for you to do.



Tell your union how the meeting went. This could include reporting back to your union representative, but also through union newsletters or at a local meeting. **The more union members who know how the meeting went, the better.**

Encourage co-workers and other union members to contact the elected representative after the meeting. They can call or send an email to reiterate your union's position and make it clear that many people feel this way.

Send a thank you message to the elected representative. A letter works well, and so does an email. Be sure to include additional information if you promised any, repeat your main request(s) and any commitments that were made.

If necessary, set up another meeting.



LOBBY FOR CHANGE CHECKLIST

1. Set up a meeting

- Phone their constituency office to set up the meeting.
- Ask for the meeting as a constituent.

2. Meeting checklist

- Unions will often have key information on topics relevant to workers.
- Make sure you bring any 'leave behind' documents with you.

3. At the meeting

- Make a short statement about your position on the issue.
- Speak from your own experience as a worker or a representative of workers.
- Stick to the issues you are there to talk about.
- Make sure to ask the elected official what their stance is on the issue.
- Try to get a commitment from the elected representative before the meeting ends.
- Make sure to thank the elected official and the staff for setting up the meeting.

4. After the meeting / Follow up

- Sit down together and talk about how the meeting went
- Tell your union how the meeting went.
- Encourage co-workers and other union members to contact the elected representative after the meeting.
- Send a thank you message to the elected representative.
- If necessary, set up another meeting.