



Writing for Action Guidelines

So, you feel passionate about something and need to talk to an Elected Official about this issue. Great! Here are guidelines that will help you prepare yourself and write your letter.

Prepare Yourself

What do you want to achieve?

- Can you clearly name the issue and the change you want?

Who can give it to you?

- Who can best act on this issue?
- Who will influence the person who can take the action?
- Who can you influence in the process?

What do they need to hear?

- Can you name what is motivating you? How will you articulate your perspective?
- What supporting materials are there for your perspective?
- Who else is working on this issue? What is their message?
- Is there a sample letter related to the issue that you can use as a model?

Prepare to Write the Letter

- Review the guidelines for writing a persuasive letter (found below).
- Review the sample letter (found below).
- Determine who the letter will be written to (the person that you named could best act on your issue).
- Determine who will be copied on the letter (those who you named as having influence and your allies in the work).
- Make a list of the top three things you would like to include in a letter to the Elected Official.

Write Your Letter

Once you are happy with it, ask a friend or family member to read it.

- If they are unfamiliar with the issue: do they clearly understand what you have written and what you are asking?
- If they share your perspective on the issue: can they name a strength in the letter and offer a place for improvement?

Address Your Letter

- You can find your local officials contact information by visiting your town, county, municipal, or city website. In the search bar, type "contact council members."
- You can find your provincial officials (members of legislative assemblies (MLA) or member of Provincial Parliament (MPP)) by using an internet search engine. Type "find my (fill in the blank territory or province) MLA/MPP:"
- You can find your Member of Parliament's contact information on the [House of Commons website](#).
- Learn the protocols for writing to elected officials:
 - [Government of Canada protocol guidelines](#)
 - [Peacemakers Trust: How to Address Government Officials in Canada](#)

Send Your Letter

- Email is an effective and timely way of communicating.
- A paper letter put in the post will be given more consideration. A hand-written letter will stand out even more.
- Letters to Members of Federal Parliament mailed to their Ottawa offices are postage free.
- A hand-delivered letter to the local office of your elected official can be a way of building relationship with their staff and raising your profile.

Guidelines for Writing a Persuasive Letter

Elected officials and their staff highlight the effectiveness of a personal letter written by a constituent. A letter and envelope written by hand will be noticed more than an email.

Style

- Write an original letter—it will most likely be more effective than a form letter.
- Use your own words.
- Be respectful and invite them into relationship with you by sharing your own relevant experiences and connecting it to them personally.
- Offer two to three specific points about your issue that explains your position.
- Be concise—one to two pages are best. If you have more information, include a brief (a summary) on the topic or any other informational materials.

Content

- State the purpose or objective at the beginning and briefly introduce your concerns.
- Thank the elected official for any positive action they have taken in the past on this issue or related issues.
- Personalize and include your own relevant experiences.
- Ask for information or clarification on your elected official's position. Questions that provoke a response are best.
- Request a commitment to a specific action and give a rationale for your request (e.g., sign an open letter and talk to the Minister of Foreign Affairs).
- Request that the elected official respond to your letter and include your contact information.

Sample Letter with Annotation

March 1, 2022

Always include the date for reference and accountability.

Mr. John Smith, M.P.
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Include name and address of MP with the appropriate style of address.

State your purpose for writing the letter.

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am writing concerning the development of a federal poverty reduction strategy. In 2013, according to the lowest commonly accepted measure, 2.96 million people in Canada were living in poverty. A comprehensive federal strategy could significantly reduce this number and change the lives of many poor Canadians. I hope that you will do everything you can to bring about positive change in this area.

I have volunteered at a local food bank for six years. While it is rewarding to be a part of this work, it saddens me to see more and more people in our community in need of this type of assistance just to live day-to-day. Many of our clients could be lifted out of poverty through the implementation of a federal poverty reduction strategy.

Add personal and relevant experience.

Your party has committed to many actions to address poverty in Canada, including: reforming employment insurance, offering affordable housing and childcare, and seeking justice for aboriginal peoples. Your party has also called for Parliamentary hearings to address a federal poverty reduction strategy. Please now adopt an official federal poverty reduction strategy, which would include:

Include clear requests.

- Creating a comprehensive, integrated federal plan for poverty elimination
- Passing a federal Act to eliminate poverty, promote social inclusion and strengthen social security
- Collecting and allocating sufficient federal revenue to invest in social security

Ask questions.

Thank you for your commitment in the past to justice and combating poverty. Will you now work towards a federal poverty reduction strategy to be announced by your party? What specific actions will you take towards this goal? Please respond with answers to these key questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jane Anderson
321 Justice St.
Edmonton, AB A1B 2C3

Thank the MP for actions they have taken

Request a response.

cc: other MPs, ministers, and organizations who also received the letter

Include your name and address at the end of the letter. Your postal code is very important as it shows that you are a member of your MP's constituency.

Materials adapted from resources created by "Brave Spaces for Hard Conversations Workshop" participants supported by Jeanette Romkema of Global Learning Partners, 2018

"cc" (carbon copy) other MPs, ministers, and organizations who have received the same letter. The recipient will know that others are aware of this issue.



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