

LOBBYING STRATEGIES

2006

Using Resources Efficiently

FEDERAL

Ministers, standing committees, advisory groups, civil servants

1. HRDC (CSLP, training, students with disabilities)
2. Finance (Taxes, arms-length foundations, Bankruptcy & Insolvency, transfer payments)
3. Industry (Granting councils)
4. Citizenship and Immigration (International student regulations)
5. Indian and Northern Affairs (Band funding)
6. International Trade (trade negotiations)
7. Heritage Canada (Francophone grants)

PROVINCIAL

Ministers, standing committees, advisory groups, civil servants

1. Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities
2. Finance
3. Community, Family, and Children's Services (Social Assistance, Childcare)
4. Consumer and Business Relations (Collection Agents)
5. Municipal Affairs and Housing

LOCAL

Federal and provincial elected representatives in all surrounding ridings

MUNICIPALITIES

1. Transit authority
2. Community health

CAMPUS

1. Board of Governors or Governing Council
 2. Academic Senate or Council
 3. Physical Plant
 4. Deans and Departmental Heads
- Lobbying is not negotiating. Elected student representatives meet with administrators and bureaucrats to learn and to exchange information. The desire to "cut a deal" with a decision-maker is common, but beware. Easy wins are rarely "wins" at all!

CUPE 1281

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Points to Keep in Mind

- There is no single form of lobbying. Lobbying to get a government contract is very different from defending the interests of students and/or specific policies for post-secondary education. In the second case, public opinion becomes paramount and there has to be a public relations campaign to support lobbying efforts.
- Provide information to ‘friendly’ decision-makers on a regular basis. These people will usually embrace solid research findings that will allow them to better argue their case with their colleagues.
- Busy people don’t like to have their time wasted. You lose credibility if you ask to meet with decision-makers who have already met you without bringing new information and/or new arguments.
- Be well prepared when meeting decision-makers. You should know what this person has said about post-secondary education, what he or she thinks on student issues, etc. You should also know what you want from that person: an opinion, a commitment, etc.
- Do not be intimidated by the argument that “your position is interesting, but money is short.” The institution / government has access to resources; it chooses how to spend them.
- Informal clothes are fine, especially in summer, as long as you are neat and tidy.
- Prepare a brief written statement of your position to leave behind with the decision-maker. A couple of pages have a much better chance of being read than a long document. Draw on pre-existing resources and research (fact sheets, etc) to support your position.

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The Meeting

ESTABLISH YOUR AGENDA AND GOALS

Know what subject you are going to address. Don't overload with issues - stick to no more than two or three.

Decide what you would like to get out of the visit, i.e., a commitment to vote for your issue, leadership on the issue, or you may decide the visit is simply informational.

Allow time for small talk at the outset, but not too much. Remember, it's your visit. If it is a group visit, decide who will start the discussion and put your agenda on the table.

LISTEN WELL

Much of lobbying is listening, looking for indications of the official's views, and finding opportunities to provide good information.

If you are meeting with a "silent type," draw her/him out by asking questions.

If you are confronted with a "long-winded type," look for openings to bring her/him back to the point.

BE PREPARED, BUT DON'T FEEL THAT YOU NEED TO BE AN EXPERT

Most officials are generalists, like many of us. Do your homework, but don't feel that you need to know

every little detail of an issue. Air personal experiences where appropriate. Relate the concerns of members of the community.

Know when to admit "I don't know," and offer to follow up with the information.

Be open to counter-arguments, but don't get stuck on them. Don't be argumentative or confrontational.

DON'T STAY TOO LONG

Know in advance how much time has been allotted for the meeting.

Try to get closure on your issue. If you hear what you had hoped for, express your thanks and leave.

If you reach an impasse, thank her, even if disappointed, and say so. Leave room to continue the discussion at another time.

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The Meeting (continued)

REMEMBER YOU ARE THERE TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

If the elected official is good on an issue you've been involved in or has supported your position in the past, be sure to acknowledge your appreciation during the course of the visit.

If the opposite is true, think of the phrase, "No permanent friends, no permanent enemies." Some day, on some issue of importance to you, she may come through. In the meantime, your visit may prevent the official from being an active opponent. In other words, you may help to turn down the heat on the other side.

FOLLOW-UP IS IMPORTANT

Be sure to send a thank-you note after the visit. If commitments were made in the meeting, repeat your understanding of them. If staff members were present, write to them too. They can often be important allies.