

Letter Writing for Members of Parliament

An original informed personal letter to a local member of parliament can be an effective tool for change and make a significant impact on government policy.

The following are suggestions for writing to a member of parliament:

- Briefly introduce the topic of the letter and the concerns in the opening sentence or paragraph.
- If writing to the local member of parliament, state residency in the riding early in the letter.
- Use two to three specific points about the issue to explain the position.
- Members should describe their interest in the issue and include personal relevant experiences or explain how the issue affects them, their family or community.
- Ensure the facts are accurate and credible.
- Include questions that should provoke a response such as asking for more information or clarification on the member of parliament's position.
- Request a commitment to a specific action and explain why it has been requested.
- Request the member of parliament respond to the letter.
- End the letter by restating the pitch and thank the recipient for taking the time to read the letter.
- Keep letters short and concise—not more than one page.
- Be sure to sign the letter.
- Leave personal contact information (e-mail address, etc.).
- Keep a copy of the letter sent to refer to upon receipt of a response.
- Share the letter with other members who are also advocating for the cause and ask them to send letters as well. When members of parliament receive multiple letters on the same issue, more attention will be paid to it.
- Follow up by writing back again if a response is not received within a reasonable timeframe. Consider including any reminders of previous requests.
- Follow up can also be done with an e-mail to thank members of parliament again for reading the letter. Mention that a response to the query when possible would be appreciated.
- If contacting a cabinet minister, send a copy to the corresponding shadow minister and note this in the address portion of the letter. This lets the minister's office know the opposition has also received a copy and may ensure a prompt response. This also provides the opportunity to approach the shadow minister's office if a response from the minister's office is not received.
- Contact information for a list of members of parliament can be found on the parliament website, parl.ca.
- Consult the League's *Personal Letter Writing Guide* at cwl.ca for additional information.

An e-mail may be just as effective as a letter by post as parliamentary staff handle both in the same way. When sending e-mails to a member of parliament or other elected representative, be sure to follow the same rules as writing a letter. The e-mail should be brief and focused. Make sure to ask the representative to respond to the e-mail. Be sure to include a return address and postal code so the representative is aware that the e-mail came from one of their constituents.