

Letter Writing: A Powerful Advocacy Tool

Communicating your views to elected officials about how laws or public policies affect your family and community is one of the most effective ways to influence a parliamentary democracy.

7 Reasons to Write a Letter

1. **Letters take effort.** Taking the time to write makes an impression that outweighs the specific details of the letter. Politicians interpret a single letter as speaking for 100 other silent constituents who share your view.
2. **Letters are personal.** A 2009 Nanos Research survey found that 88% of MPs were motivated to act by personal letters, compared to 45% for form letters and just 8% for online campaigns.
3. **Letters are effective.** Mail is a politician's gauge of public opinion. Representatives who won by a slim margin pay extra attention and will report back to leaders if an unpopular policy risks losing their riding.
4. **Letters finish a conversation.** Follow-up letters show you are invested. Use them to thank representatives, commend steps taken, and reemphasize your desired outcome or unaddressed issues. Set up a face-to-face meeting for deep concerns.
5. **Letters are a meaningful way to say “thank you.”**
6. **Letters document your concerns.** Parliamentary staff keep a tally of constituent positions. Unless they directly contradict a party platform, original letters can sway how an MP votes.
7. **Silence implies consent.** Representatives assume a lack of response equals tacit approval of their actions.

Write to the Right Person

MPs and MPPs maintain two types of offices. Write to their **local constituency office** for personal problems, and to their **legislative office** (House of Commons or Queen's Park) regarding legislation or government business.

Stick to Your Riding

Representatives care very little about letters from outside their riding. Do not write outside your riding unless contacting a cabinet minister, an opposition critic, or a Parliamentary Committee Chair monitoring broad public opinion or seeking specialized expertise.

CFUW Rule: If a CFUW club contacts anyone other than their own representative, they cannot refer to CFUW in the correspondence. Contact Ontario Council or CFUW National to coordinate broader communications.

Jurisdictional Guide

Make sure your issue matches the correct level of government:

Federal	Provincial	Municipal
● Citizenship & Immigration ● Environment ● Fisheries & Oceans ● Health ● Industry ● Justice ● Natural Resources ● Old Age Security ● Public Safety ● Transport ● Treasury Board	● Children & Youth Services ● Community & Social Services ● Education ● Energy ● Environment ● Family Benefits ● Health Care Delivery ● Housing ● Infrastructure ● Labour ● Natural Resources	● Arts & Community ● Building & Health Inspection ● By-Laws ● Environment ● Libraries ● Parks & Recreation ● Planning & Zoning ● Policing & Fire Protection ● Solid Waste Management ● Transportation & Infrastructure ● Water & Sewer

Best Practices for Your Letter

1. Be Accurate

You do not need to be an expert, but you must fact-check and rely on credible sources. Rely on facts and avoid emotional arguments.

2. Be Clear & Concise

- Keep it brief (one page is ideal) and limit it to a single issue so your effectiveness isn't diluted.
- Write simply, in plain language, to avoid miscommunication.
- Start with a clear statement of purpose and briefly introduce your concerns (for example, *"I am writing to express my concern about..."*). Cite the Bill number if appropriate.
- Make a concrete request — for example, *"Please pass legislation immediately which will keep oil wells out of our parks"* rather than a vague *"Please bear in mind the potential conflict..."* Repeat this request in the final paragraph.

3. Be Personal

Use your own words, share personal experiences, and provide examples of community impact. Request a personal response, as personal letters carry far more weight than postcards or pre-printed materials.

4. Be Political

If writing for your club, use club stationery. Explain how your request benefits the broader community, include a written brief or informational materials, and ask for your representative's specific position and how they intend to vote.

Alternative Approaches & Follow-Up

Emails Work Too

Parliamentary staff handle emails and physical letters the same way, and MPs actually rank email as their preferred way to hear from constituents. When emailing:

- Follow standard letter-writing guidelines (brief, focused, and plain language).
- Use the correct style of address for the representative.
- Always include your physical address and postal code in the signature line.

Launch a Campaign

Join forces with friends, colleagues, and relevant organizations to multiply your impact. Issues gain significantly more attention when a representative receives multiple letters. Share your template with your network and encourage them to personalize it.

Follow Up!

Keep a copy of your letter. Send reminders regarding your requests or their past commitments, and write back to thank them when they respond.