



If this will be your first time meeting with your MP, you may find the following information useful to help you prepare.

Some of us have discussed human rights and Amnesty International's concerns with our Members of Parliament (MPs) in the past. For others among us, this is a new experience that might make us feel uneasy. It is good to remember that MPs are accustomed to being approached by constituents and that the name and work of Amnesty International carries considerable credibility and authority – even though in a few cases you might have to introduce AI to your MP.

All politicians expect to be contacted by citizens who wish to influence the process of policy-making. It is a part of their duty to know what their constituents think and to become familiar with different opinions on particular issues. Those who are friendly to your position may give you more time; however, even those opposed, can be influenced by a direct show of community support for an issue. Always keep in mind that politicians are people too.

Many of us believe politicians to be more knowledgeable than us because they are in decision-making positions. We worry they might ask questions that we can't answer. Those who have experience in working with politicians tell us that after their first meeting with them, the mystery that surrounds politicians quickly fades. They are ordinary people who come from a variety of backgrounds and are often responsive to us, the citizens who elect them, and who can also defeat them in the next election.

#### **Why are MPs an important audience for Amnesty International?**

MPs can play a significant role in keeping human rights issues on the Canadian political agenda. Sending a campaign postcard or a letter to an elected official is a powerful way to get our message across, but direct personal contact between constituents and politicians at the local level is an even more effective form of campaigning.

#### **Does it matter to which party my MP belongs?**

No. The party in power formulates government policy, but all MPs have influence. They can make statements, ask questions, and make speeches in Parliament. They can not only influence their own party's policies, but in the various stages of the parliamentary process they may also influence opinions of MPs from other parties too.

#### **Do I need to be an expert?**

No. We speak credibly as human rights defenders. Through our commitment to human rights and corporate accountability we will get across the key messages of the Open for Justice campaign. Remember, MPs need to keep on top of a wide range of issues. Often, you will indeed be more knowledgeable about a particular issue than your MP. Most MPs are grateful for whatever information you can provide. In cases where you do not have the information your MP requests, please inform the MP that you will gather this information and forward it to him or her.



**ARRANGING A MEETING WITH YOUR MP****Who is your MP?**

If you don't know who your MP is, check out the House of Commons' website at: <http://www.parl.gc.ca> , or phone the Government of Canada Information Line at: 1-800-OCANADA.

**How to set up a meeting**

Phone your MP's local constituency office, explain who you are, that you want a meeting, and what you want to discuss. Follow up this call with an email or letter to your MP that reiterates the same points and welcomes a meeting at your mutual convenience. Include in your letter a reference to our national website ([www.amnesty.ca](http://www.amnesty.ca)) for your MP's information and invite them to visit this site.

**When is a good time to meet with an MP?**

You should meet with your MP when they are in their constituency office in their home riding. (When they are not in their constituency they are usually in Ottawa). This spring (2014), MPs are scheduled to be in their constituency offices on the following dates:

**February 17-21**

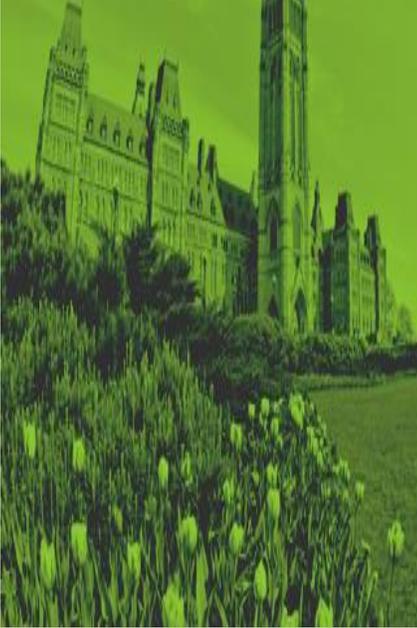
**March 10-21**

**April 14-25**

**PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING**

- Review the Open for Justice campaign documents, including the Campaign Backgrounder, Questions and Answers, and Talking Points.
- Discuss this opportunity with your group members, other Amnesty International groups in your constituency, and/or other likely allies in your community. If there is more than one Amnesty International Community and/or Youth & Student Group in your constituency, you may want to work together to prepare your approach to your MP.
- Ideally, the delegation that meets with the MP should be comprised of 2-4 people of varying ages and backgrounds.
- Hold one or more preparatory meetings of the delegation before seeing the MP. Review the experience and comfort levels of the delegation members. Determine who has met with the MP before and use their experience.
- Set goals for the lobbying session and decide on what your expectations for the MP will be.
- Prepare the appropriate documents and materials you wish to present to your MP.
- Consider what you want to say during your meeting and decide on spokespersons: introductions; background information about campaign; our recommendations (access to courts and an extractive sector ombudsperson); ask the MP to sign our pledge; provide list of other actions MP can take; arrange future dialogue.
- Research your MP's background. The more you know about your MP the better you can pitch your case – and the more likely he or she will be to take action! Visit the MP's website. Look for: whether your MP holds a position in government or in opposition; whether he/she sits on a House of Commons committee or all party group; what did he/she do before becoming an MP; does he/she have a personal interest in human rights issues (through perhaps having lived or worked overseas); does he or she sit on a corporate board of directors?
- Prepare to set an effective working tone for the meeting. It is not a confrontation but rather a dialogue about building respect for human rights in Canada and abroad.

## DURING THE MEETING



- Be prompt and courteous.
- Agree on the length of your meeting (it is reasonable to expect at least 30 minutes).
- If you have business cards, ensure that you exchange your cards with your MP and all of his or her staff at the beginning of the meeting.
- Do not necessarily expect immediate agreement on key issues and do not attempt quick conversions to Amnesty's points of view.
- Clarify both shared and differing points of view on key issues.
- Identify whether your MP has special opportunities to influence government support for specific recommendations in the agenda.
- If there are questions you cannot answer, or issues about which you are uncertain, explain that you don't have the answer and that you would be happy to provide the information soon as possible.
- Keep the meeting focused on achieving the results you set for yourselves.
- Be prepared to answer the question "what concrete action can I take?" Ask your MP to sign the pledge and outline other actions that your MP can take to support the Open for Justice campaign.

## AFTER THE MEETING



- Following your meeting, please contact Amnesty to let us know how your meeting went. See contact information below.
- Write a follow-up letter to your MP to thank her or him for the meeting; summarize the key points of your discussion; reiterate commitments to action that were made; and provide whatever further information was requested.

## MORE INFORMATION

**Web:** [www.amnesty.ca/open-for-justice](http://www.amnesty.ca/open-for-justice)

**Email:** [fkoza@amnesty.ca](mailto:fkoza@amnesty.ca)

**Tel:** 604 294 5160 x 103

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/AICanadaBHR](http://www.facebook.com/AICanadaBHR)

**Twitter:** @AICanadaBHR

