

Notes for Meeting with your Federal MP on Climate Change

Notes for Team Members

- Your group needs to meet to prepare. One person should act as team leader to coordinate, contact the MP's office, etc., make introductions and ensure that you don't go off-message at the meeting, and finally to ensure follow-up. (See Notes for Team Leaders for further details.)
- Political parties have different positions on climate change. Find out the general position of your MP's party. (Your member may have an individual position somewhat different, but would find it difficult to say so publicly.)
- At the meeting, introduce yourselves and bring a written statement to leave with the MP, the Citizens Guide to a Climate Change Action Plan, a brochure, or another environmental organization's brochure. You will doubtless be politely received. It is good to take notes (a tape recording might be tacky). If the MP is keen and largely on side, propose that he or she sponsor an "town hall" or community forum on climate action, to help push the agenda. If your MP is not at all keen, say you hope to change their mind, that this is urgent, refer the person to the IPCC website, etc. Keep the door open for another visit. No party is saying or doing as much as is needed. So, wherever your MP stands, try to get him or her to move further.
- If you are told that the MP is doing everything already, ask if he or she has supported a reduction plan which meets necessary targets. If you get an absolute refusal, ask if the MP has any "open hours" at his or her office, or when he or she might be having a meeting or community forum that you could attend and ask your questions publicly.

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Notes for Team Leaders

- Keep a list of all persons wishing to join in on the visit (telephone numbers and emails, also addresses desirable as the MP's office may ask for a list of who is coming, and may want to ascertain that the people are from the riding).
- Organize a meeting of participants (at someone's home, office or cafe, etc.). This need not take long (an hour will do it, or if people want to talk climate change content, somewhat more). Get times of availability of participants for the meeting with the MP. (Possibly not all will be able to attend--you need to negotiate with the MP's office to get a convenient time.) Discuss what content you want to focus on (there is so much). Different participants bring different areas of expertise. A forum for exchanges (restricted to people who have agreed to meet their representative) is available at www.justearth.net. The co-ordinator can be contacted at mpvisits@justearth.net
- Ensure that you have written background information to take to the meeting (JustEarth, or information from other environmental organizations on climate change). Obtain the party position on climate change of your MP, and any special particulars of that person. (He or she may be a member of the environment committee, or have spoken out on the issue.)
- Contact the MP's office (see Notes for a Meeting) to arrange a meeting. This may take several telephone calls and/or emails or faxes. Unless you get a meeting arranged immediately, follow up with a written letter to the MP. MPs are busy, spend much of their time in Ottawa, and have other obligations that require travel outside the constituency. We can't be sure that a request for a meeting actually got to them.
- A letter to an MP needs no stamp if it is sent to:
Name of MP,
House of Commons,
Ottawa ON, K1A 0A6.
(Emails go free, too, but there are so many one may be ignored.)
- Members' assistants tend to be nice and helpful. Cultivate!
- Persistence may be required. This is a very important and urgent cause.
- Arrange to meet briefly with the group just before the scheduled meeting takes place, to review who is doing what.
- At the meeting introduce yourselves, briefly, and clarify how much time you have. Make sure that you get to make your points within that time. MPs may go overtime--some find the opportunity to discuss helpful, something to aim at. You can't predict how a meeting will go. Discussions can ramble--bring the MP back to the subject if he or she digresses too much. Be specific about what you hope for on the part of the MP (see the Notes). Thank the MP for his or her time.
- When you are well away from the MP's office, debrief. Analyze how it went. Consider how to follow up. Let JustEarth know - send email to mpvisits@justearth.net. We will post responses on the website.
- Follow up with a letter of thanks for the MP's time. (This helps to keep the door open for another visit, by you, or others, or some combination of new blood and you.)
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