

Tools for Effective Lobbying

As a provincial co-operative association, On Co-op is itself a non-partisan organization. However, we recognize that we live in an environment that is highly influenced by government and politics. Consequently, we also recognize the need to **INFORM, INFLUENCE, and EDUCATE** political parties and the government about the co-operative sector.

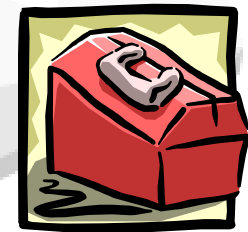
In a non-partisan way, we lobby the government with respect to issues of concern to us, provide public policy makers with information, and participate in various events organized by the different political parties. However, we can't do it – and shouldn't do it - alone! We require the help of local co-op champions in each riding to support our efforts and build ONE VOICE for the co-operative community.

Making the decision to get involved and help lobby the government is the first step. Once you have done this, you need to know how to approach members of government, effectively and efficiently, in order to turn your concerns and issues into action. We created this toolkit to help you achieve this goal.

About the toolkits

These toolkits are guides to help you in lobbying on behalf of the co-op sector, for your own individual lobbying efforts, and as a means to making the process of meeting with MPPs, Ministers and their staff less intimidating and more effective. You can use all or parts of this guide, depending on whether you are attending a sit-down meeting with an MPP at their constituency or Queen's Park office, an all-candidates meeting in your riding, or other political events. Simply adopt our suggestions on the following pages to suit your own issues and needs as necessary.

On Co-op Toolkit for Local Co-op Advocates



Toolkits in This Series

Toolkit #1: Meeting MPPs at their Queen's Park and Constituency Office

Toolkit #2: Attending Events with MPPs and Government Officials

Toolkit #3: Initiating Communication, Relaying Your Key Message & Rallying Support

Note: If you have questions about this guide, or need assistance with a government relations matter, please contact us at On Co-op. We'll be happy to help you!



**Build a better Ontario...
Move forward with the Co-op Secretariat.**

Toolkit #2: Attending Events with MPPs and Government Officials

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Attending Events with MPPs and Government Officials



Preparing for the meeting:

Research your MPP — know in advance what issues are important to him or her and a bit about who they are.

For information on MPPs, refer to the Ontario Legislative Assembly website at www.ontla.on.ca.

Prepare some quick facts about your co-op and the relevant market. In other words, why your co-op matters to them.

Prepare the key issue(s) you are going to raise – the fewer points you have and the more specific you are, the better. Not being specific may cause you to lose your focus as to why you're there in the first place, and what's most important, which is the key message...

Determine the key message — What are you trying to convey? Why should *you* matter? All the attending representatives from your co-op should have the *same* message. Remember, time is of the essence at these events, as the MPP's attention will be split between you and numerous people representing their own organizations, and with their own issues to raise. **Your job is to get the message across, and theirs is to circulate!**

Find strength in numbers — Talk to other members of your co-op and find out if they are willing to attend with you. Senior staff or board members are particularly effective in revealing how a local co-op has impacted their lives and/or that of the community.

What to do... What not to do...

And... What to expect:

The goal of attending these events, including the all-candidates meetings, is **NOT to raise new issues**, as their party's political platforms are already established at this point. Your goal is to **raise the visibility** of the co-op sector, within the framework of the existing platform or party stance.

The MPP or election candidate may not be familiar with your co-op, or the co-op sector in general. Educate them by **telling them briefly about your co-op** and how it has changed your life in a positive way, or benefited the community in a specific way. This adds a vital human and emotional element to your discussion.

You will want to use a very **focused and specific** approach, as MPPs and candidates don't want to be bombarded with lengthy, complex questions that will take up too much effort or time (1 or 2 questions is best). Don't monopolize their time.

You are there as a representative to raise the **key issue or question** to ensure it gets noticed.

Be careful what you ask, as you must be in a position to respond to any questions directed at you in an intelligent and knowledgeable manner. **Never guess at an answer — tell them you will investigate and follow-up with them in the near future — and then do it!**

If possible, leave them your business card and some **background material** on your co-op, the sector in general, a copy of the *Proposal for the Co-operatives Secretariat*, and a list of co-operatives in their constituency (On Co-op can provide these for you) – this will serve as a reminder of your co-op and the issues that you are raising.

In closing your discussion, **thank them** for their time and attention, and tell them that you will follow-up in the near future. Remind them that co-ops are eager to work with the government, as they share similar goals and strive to develop policies that strengthen communities across Ontario.

Don't ignore political staffers or executive assistants who may be present at these events. They may be policy advisors or someone who is in a position to open doors for you in the future.

Following up to the meeting:

Shortly after the event, follow-up with a **formal "thank you" letter** addressed to the MPP(s) and or candidate(s) you spoke with. Thank them for their time spent with you, their attention and (hopefully) interest and support in your co-op and the issues that were discussed. This is another opportunity to emphasize the benefits of a co-operative and government partnership and working toward shared goals.

Inform your co-op, your local co-op federation and On Co-op of the results of the meeting – how it went and what, if any, commitments they made to you. Send On Co-op a brief e-mail summarizing your results. Sharing information is an important step in furthering key issues that most co-ops have in common.

Follow up with your MPP about a month after your meeting, to remind him/her of any commitments that they made to you and what they may have done. This is key, as they have many diverging issues and priorities to deal with, so keep yours at the forefront by demonstrating you are serious and actively involved in change.