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The Catholic Women's League of Canada Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council

A guide For Meeting with Elected Officials

"Legislation is social justice in action. It is the carrying out of League resolutions to influence government policy." (Legislation Executive Handbook) One of the best ways to influence government is to meet with them in person. Preparing well makes all the difference in how influential we are in changing policy.

The first thing to remember is that there are other people and groups also seeking a meeting with the same officials that you are. Patience is a virtue but in this venture, so is persistence. Try to book your appointment as soon as you have an issue to discuss. Here are some tips to help you prepare for and get your meeting:

- Why do you want to meet? What does your council want?
- Which minister has the portfolio that your issue falls under? Does your issue fall under more than one ministry?
- Come up with your plan; write down what you want from this meeting.
- Compose the body of your letter, be concise, thank the official for previous work, have someone else edit it.
- Go to the government website and find the address of your official.
- Send a hard copy.
- Follow up with an email or phone call about a week later.
- The minister has staff – be nice to the staff!

Further tips to help you prepare:

- Gather all of the relevant information you have to support your request.
- Prepare folders or binders for each minister you will meet with; you will need several copies for each meeting not just for the minister but also the staff.
- If your request is asking for action on a CWL Resolution, have the resolution, brief and citations as part of your packages. Have this as a separate folder with a title page.
- If possible, make sure your secretary is part of your delegation so she can take minutes. Ask the staff member who is taking minutes to forward a copy of theirs to you.
- Include the Standing Committee Chair(s) of the resolution(s) as part of your delegation.
- Make sure you ask the minister's staff how large your delegation can be; sometimes meeting space can be an issue. Try to not have too large a delegation.
- Send your package to the minister(s) you wish to meet with as well as to the Opposition and other parties. It is important that the Opposition knows what you are asking for. They can help keep the minister's feet to the fire if they support your issue.
- Gather for about an hour before your meeting to ensure you are all up to speed on the issues you will bring forth as well as to go over any last minute details.
- Be professional.
- Wear your CWL scarf and pins.

It is really important to be well prepared. Practise your presentation, in front of someone else if possible. Rehearse answers to possible questions that may be asked by those you are meeting with. Have your own questions ready, especially if it looks like they may not be inclined to do anything with your request. Ask them "why not?", politely, of course.

Follow up! If you have not heard from the minister's office within a reasonable time, send a follow-up letter or email asking where they are with your issue. Be persistent!