

# Lobby Meeting Guide<sup>1</sup>

Mount Royal Faculty Association  
Spring 2023

## Thank You!

On behalf of the Association and its 800 members, thank you for lending your voice and time, alongside your colleagues, to important initiatives that collectively advance our advocacy goals.

The Association affirms its commitment to a vision of universal, equitable access to affordable, high-quality public post-secondary education (PSE), comprising diverse programs of study and scholarship that grow our knowledge and understanding and that uphold our University's responsibilities to its many publics—that is, to healthy PSE as a public good. This is a vision of PSE in which all members of the academic staff play a decisive role in shared governance and participate meaningfully in protecting and strengthening the conditions necessary for robust academic work. We commit to engaging with the public and policymakers on these issues. Thank you for being an integral part of our engagement strategies!

## Remember: You Are Representing the Association and Your Colleagues

Please familiarize yourself with the MRFA's approved and membership-ratified [Standing Advocacy Goals](#). Likely, there are other issues about which you are passionate. We encourage you to engage with these in other forums. Please use Association-organized meetings with your politician to engage on Association-identified key messages. This does not mean that you should avoid personalizing our collective key messages. Do not shy away from conveying these through stories about your own experiences – see our tips below.

Please remember: The Association is non-partisan in that it does not support a particular political party or candidate for office. However, we do take positions on matters of public policy.

## 10 Simple Rules to Follow When Meeting a Politician

### Getting started:

1. **Be clear about the purpose of the meeting.** Clarity about your objectives will help set the tone for the meeting. Express appreciation for the visit and immediately state why you are there.
2. **Do not be intimidated.** Remember, you are the expert. In most cases, your politician will have only a general understanding of post-secondary education issues. In many cases, they will ask questions and will be sincerely interested in learning more.

### Engaging in the conversation:

3. **A lobby meeting is a conversation.** Do not give a lecture. The conversation should flow back and forth. It is important to express your views, but to listen as well. Be concise.
4. **Stick to the basics.** Know your key message(s) and keep your conversation focused on a few basic points. Avoid jargon. The more complicated and convoluted your message, the greater the

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Canadian Association of University Teachers Parliament Hill Day 2020 *Lobbying Tips*.

chance the conversation will wander into uncharted territory, your key messages will be lost or misunderstood, or your Politician may disregard your perspective.

5. **When it comes to influencing politicians, anecdotes trump data.** Anecdotes personalize an issue and resonate with a politician far more than even the most carefully reasoned argument. As academics this can be difficult but try to support your key messages with personal stories.
6. **Keep the conversation on track.** Do not let your conversation wander to other unrelated issues. If the politician you are lobbying tries to change the topic, gently return to your main point.
7. **If you cannot answer a question, do not try.** If during your meeting a politician asks you something you cannot answer, do not make up a response. Instead, tell the politician you do not know the answer, but you can find out and will follow up after the meeting.
8. **Do not lose your temper.** In some rare cases, you may find a politician that is simply unresponsive or even openly hostile to your concerns. Do not engage in a heated exchange. Consider switching to a different key message, where you may get more traction. Sometimes it is ok to just listen to a politician that you disagree with – reporting their perspective to the MRFA can be very valuable for future meetings. At the end, respectfully reiterate your key points, thank the politician for the opportunity to speak and end the meeting.

### Wrapping up:

9. **Get a commitment.** Ask your politician to do something concrete to show support for your issues. They could ask a question or make a statement in the Legislature or raise your concerns at a caucus meeting.
10. **Remember to follow-up.** Once the meeting is over, your lobbying efforts should not end. Please report back to the MRFA. Your politician may wish to take a photo with you. Please take a picture and send it to the MRFA when you report back. You may want to extend an invitation to your campus, to meet with your association executive, or to attend any special meetings or events you have may have planned. Please cc. the MRFA. The MRFA will send a letter to express gratitude for the meeting.

## Lobby Meeting Checklist

### Before the meeting:

1. Review the provided background and briefing documents, as well as your politician's biography.
2. Connect with the other lobby delegates taking part in your meeting ahead of time to establish who will take the lead on each topic, the order in which group members will speak, and who will complete the "Lobby Report" after the meeting.
3. If the meeting is online, an MRFA staff member will open the call and monitor for any issues. Have your personalized itinerary on hand and note the staff member and their contact information should you require troubleshooting during the meeting.

### At the meeting:

1. Introduce yourselves to your politician and their staff and express appreciate for the meeting.
2. Make a short statement about why you are there.
  - a. Note that you are members of the Mount Royal Faculty Association, which represents 800 members of the academic staff at Mount Royal University.

- b. State the purpose of the meeting (e.g., “We are here to talk about the ways in which our provincial government can support high-quality post-secondary education that benefits Alberta’s citizens.”)
  - c. Briefly introduce your key messages and position (as the conversation unfolds, you will reinforce these messages with examples, stories, and experiences – see the tips above).
3. Address each key message in turn. Time is limited, so try to stay in control of the meeting. Do not get sidetracked by the politician or staff who are in attendance. Stick to the issues that you came to discuss.
4. Try to get a commitment from your politician before the end of the meeting (see tip #9 above). Make sure any commitments are mutually understood, including those made by you to follow up.
5. Ask your politician for a photo with your lobby group. If it is an online meeting, take a screen shot.
6. No matter the results of your meeting, please be sure to thank your politician and their staff for their time.

#### After the meeting:

1. Connect with the other lobby delegates who took part in your meeting. Share your impressions of the meeting and determine what, if any, follow-up action is required and who will do it.
2. A virtual “Lobby Report” will be sent to you. Please complete the report while the meeting is fresh in your mind.
3. Inform other MRFA members about your participation in the lobby meeting, and encourage them to lend their voice to this or other collective Association activities.