

Appendix

Organizing Tools

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Meeting with Elected Representatives

Make an appointment

Call your constituency office and request a meeting when your MLA/MP is at home. The secretary will want to know what your meeting is about. Limit your agenda to just one or two topics. Polite but firm persistence, pursued through regular contact with the constituency office, is essential. If you can't get an appointment during the upcoming break, express your disappointment—and immediately request a firm commitment for the next time he/she is back home.

The group

Small, diverse groups are best. You may want to have at least one spokesperson represent several organizations to strengthen the impression that you represent a number of constituents. Consider creating a coalition with representatives from other local groups. Try to include members of non-traditional constituencies, for example the medical, religious, sporting or science communities.

Planning

Before the meeting, get together and decide who will say what. Do not expect a lot of time with your MLA/MP. Ask the staff in advance how much time you will have and be sure to cover your key points early. Ask your MLA/MP for specific action. Find a local angle on national or provincial issues. Make sure everyone in your group has an opportunity to speak. Remind everyone to begin by focusing on the specific action you would like your MLA/MP to take.

Pre-meeting meeting

Hold a meeting prior to your appointment to ensure everyone is on time and prepared. Bring fact sheets and reference materials to leave with your MLA/MP. You should also leave a list with each group member's name, address, phone number and a summary of your agenda.

Meeting Etiquette

Be on time, dress nicely, and be polite. Never insult other MPs or MLAs. Introduce yourselves at the outset of the meeting. Have your leader give a brief introduction. State your reasons for seeking the meeting. Do not overstay your welcome; cover your points thoroughly and early. If the official is enjoying the meeting and lets it run over, fine. Be prepared to complete your agenda in the time allotted.

Follow-Up

Follow up promptly with a thank-you letter, and provide any information you promised during the meeting. Use these opportunities to build a relationship with the official and his/her staff. Invite your member to speak at an upcoming meeting or get-together.

Do not be discouraged if you do not see eye to eye with your MLA/MP on every issue; there's always another piece of legislation down the road that he or she may be helpful on. If you didn't get the answer you wanted, keep trying. Remember, these visits are an opportunity to gather information as well as air your point of view. Share what you learn with other groups and keep records for future use.

Adapted from material originally published by www.stopextinction.org



Sample Agenda for a Public Meeting

Agenda

Factory Farm Meeting —Community/Town—Date

6:00 P.M.	Introduction by Organizer
6:15–7:15 P.M.	Overview of Factory Farm Issue Video Presentation— <i>“Bacon, le Film”</i> Jane Doe— <i>lives next to a CAFO in Nextdoor, AB</i> Bob Smith— <i>water quality expert, the University</i>
7:15–7:30 P.M.	How Does This Affect Our Community?
7:30–8:00 P.M.	Question & Answer Session Time and Date of Next Meeting
8:00 P.M.—?	Refreshments



How To Create A Phone Tree

A phone tree is an easy and efficient method to quickly disseminate information to your group. Select someone in your group to be the coordinator. Then create a flow chart with the coordinator at the top and group members below. The size of your organization will determine how many people each person calls. For example, the coordinator might be responsible for phoning three people. Those three people will be responsible for phoning three more people, who in turn might each phone three more people, etc., until everyone in your organization is contacted.

The coordinator should be responsible for initiating the phone tree, so anyone who wants to put a message out to the group should phone the coordinator with the message. S/he will be in charge of initiating the tree.

Important points to remember:

- Write the message down on a piece of paper. Make sure each person you phone also writes down the message. Have them read it back to you to ensure they heard it correctly.
- If someone is not home, leave a message on their machine, but continue calling the next person on the list until you actually get someone on the line. Do not assume a message left on an answering machine will be passed on to others.
- Make sure everyone in the group has a complete phone list of all members, in case someone is not home. The person making the calls will continue down the list until they reach three people personally.
- Remind group members not to speculate in their phone tree calls—they should just pass on essential information.
- Make sure the last people in the tree phone the coordinator to repeat back the message. This will ensure that everyone has received it properly.



Phone Tree Assignment Sheet



