



Why we lobby politicians:

ACTRA Toronto is a strong voice – we are 15,000 artists who are part of the strongest cultural union in Canada. We are passionate and determined and, while we have scored many victories throughout our history, we cannot sit still. We must protect what we’ve won and constantly move our union forward.

Meeting and sharing our perspective with politicians is one of the best ways we can influence public policy. We depend on politicians to make the right decisions so that more jobs are created here and we’re paid fairly. If decision makers aren’t told how our industry works, we can’t count on them to make the right decisions.

Lobbying gives politicians the opportunity to understand our views – as artists and potential voters. They come to respect the fact that ACTRA is not only representing the best interests of performers and speaking on their behalf, but that we’re also taxpayers, consumers, residents of their communities...and voters!

You don’t need to be an expert on the issues: Listing a bunch of facts to a politician is not what will win them over. Telling your personal story and talking about your experiences as a performer, a self-employed worker and an artist is the most persuasive thing you can do. And no one knows your story better than you.

Before the meeting:

- Review the bio of the politician you are meeting with.
- Meet up with the other members who will be joining you in the meeting and review the meeting structure. Decide who will take the lead, who will tell their stories and which topics each of you will address.
- Assign a person to take notes and complete the Lobby Report.
- Practice together and think of some examples of your work that you might bring up, or examples of productions that took place in their riding or ward to demonstrate challenges and/or the benefits of our industry.

General Meeting Tips:

- At the beginning of the meeting or as you walk in, confirm with the politician or their staff how much time they have for the meeting
- Be brief in the meeting and always make room for others to speak
- Be prepared to politely take the “mic” back if the politician starts to speechify or get off topic
- Don’t worry if you don’t have an answer to a question they ask. Simply promise to get back to them. Politicians can relate – they’re constantly being asked questions for which they don’t have ready answers.
- Be yourself! You’re a citizen and a taxpayer speaking with an elected representative. Talk about your experience as an actor and a voter and put a human face on the statistics and the issues.



Telling your story:

As a rule, meetings with politicians are quite short. Many meetings are only 30 minutes and there will be other people there with you. You will not have the time to go deep into the facts and issues and, even if you did, that isn't what will win them over.

Showing, not telling, is what will leave a lasting impression on your elected representative. And your story is something only you can offer. In your meetings with politicians, it's important you take two minutes (and only two minutes) to tell your story.

When you walk out of your meeting with your local politicians, they should know the following:

1. The importance of the industry to the economy and jobs
2. What you want them to do (e.g. change legislation)
3. Most importantly: Your name, what work is like for you and what you/we need changed

You are telling your story for a reason. You want it to demonstrate the choice the politician faces. Show them how they can solve a problem and/or provide performers with an opportunity.

You can tell a story about something you experienced as a performer, something that thousands of other ACTRA members can relate to. Make sure the conclusion presents a choice that can be made by the politician to make change.

Your story should let them know who you are, show them why you are meeting with them and point to something they can change.

Before you decide what part of your personal story to tell, think about these questions:

- What will I be calling on the politician to do?
- What is a story that I can tell that includes a challenge, a choice or some uncertainty that would motivate the politician?
- What is a story that demonstrates why I act and why I am involved in my union?

<p>What your story should do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be genuine and share an experience ● Paint a scene - something vivid that paints a picture so they can imagine it ● Provide a positive ending or an opportunity for them to help create one (the change) 	<p>What you should not do when telling your story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ramble on ● Be angry or negative ● Recite your resumé or your autobiography ● List the issues ● Sound like there is no hope
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Use the space below to write down an outline for your story. Be sure to practice with someone.

Suggested Meeting Structure:

These will be short meetings. Here is our suggested meeting structure:

1. **Introductions:** Start off with quick introductions and thank the politician for taking the time to meet with you. Remind them that you live in their riding or ward, perhaps mentioning your neighbourhood or street. Remember, this meeting is already very meaningful to them because you are a voter in their constituency.
2. **Personal Stories:** Say you would like to share some personal stories with them about experiences in the industry. Then go into your stories in the order you determined before the meeting. Try to keep your stories to two minutes or less. Remember to tell something memorable. Don't list your resumé, but instead tell something personal that calls on the politician to make a change.
3. **Some Facts:** Take some time to list only a few facts. Let them know how much the industry contributes to the economy and the number of jobs in the province. However, also let them know the industry is incredibly mobile and very sensitive to the changes. Jobs can go just as quickly as they came.

This is when you can point out that you won't go into all the details now because they can find more statistics in the fact sheets and reports you will leave behind for them.

4. **The Asks:** Use your messaging sheet and report to know what the asks are and make sure you make time in the meeting to ask a very clear question of the politicians. Make sure to write down their responses. Sometimes they will sound nice but be noncommittal. Politely press for a clear answer.
5. **Thank you:** When the meeting is done, thank them for their time and provide them with the *leave behind documents* provided in your kit.
6. **Take a Photo with them:** Before you leave, ask if you can take a group photo with the politician and if you can then share the photo on social media. Suggest they do the same. Be sure to use the recommended hashtag(s).

After the Meeting

- Go somewhere where you can chat as a group and debrief. How do you think it went? What commitments came from it?
- Complete the Lobby Report while the meeting is still fresh in your memory and decide who will be responsible for submitting it. These are important records of our meetings so please don't forget to complete them!

Thank you!