

# how to write to your MP

Why write to your Member of Parliament (MP)? They need to hear from their constituents. They depend on the people they represent to educate them about what issues are most important to them.

Writing a letter or email only takes a short amount of your time, but it ensures that the people who make decisions on your behalf know how you want to be represented.

Your MP receives hundreds of messages each week on a wide range of issues – but yours will stand out because you are their constituent, and you are following the tips and tricks from this document!

Check out this guide to find out why writing to your MP is so important, how to write to them, how to structure your message to be the most impactful, and next steps!

## why should you write to your MP?

**Writing to your MP greatly increases your likelihood of receiving a response.** The vast majority of MPs will almost always respond to letters from constituents and will be happy to forward your request on to the relevant Minister (even if they disagree with you). In turn, the Minister will be obliged by parliamentary convention to respond to letters from an MP.

**You can educate your MP in the process.** Even if your MP is not the direct target of the action, your letter provides them with an opportunity to learn about the issue that concerns their constituents and take action themselves.

"The reason it's important to engage us [parliamentarians] is because we don't know everything...it's how we learn... If you engage your MP and you do it in a constructive way, then you can actually help members of parliament really understand the issues... So talk to your MPs!" - MP Anita Vandenbeld

There will be occasions where it is more strategic to write directly to other decision-makers, such as the Secretary of State (International Development), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister or the heads of key international institutions, such as the World Bank. The tips below work for those letters as well.

## why not write directly to the relevant Minister?

The purpose of a Results action might be to encourage the Secretary of State (International Development) to increase investment in a certain program or intervention that has proven effectiveness. Rather than write to the Secretary directly, we usually write to our MPs who will often forward it to Secretaries, Ministers, or even the Prime Minister.

Often it is more effective to reach out to your MP directly but for some campaigns it will be more strategic to reach out to the Secretary. It entirely depends on what we are trying to achieve. Keep an eye on our monthly calls to action to see if we recommend writing to someone other than your MP.

## why doesn't Results provide templates for letters or emails?

MPs and their staff have confirmed on numerous occasions that an original letter sent by one committed, passionate constituent is far more powerful than a pile of identical letters or postcards. Mass email actions and template letters have less impact because the MP knows that you only had to click a button, and the contents are not necessarily representative of your priorities as a constituent.

The fact that you have taken the time to craft a personalized and well-informed letter demonstrates to the MP that there are people in their constituency who care deeply about an issue. Behind every original letter or email an MP receives, they assume that at least 100 of their constituents feel the same way. In turn, your opinions are likely to be taken more seriously as a result. But feel free to refer to our [suggested layout for letters and emails to MPs](#).

## how do you write your letter or email?

### Mailed or emailed?

Every MP is different. Some are happy to correspond with constituents via email whereas others give preference to mailed letters. But rest assured that both methods of communication work, so go with what's right for you!

### Mailed letters

You can type or handwrite a physical letter to send to your MP. The easiest postal address is their Parliament address. Simply address it like this:

MP's full name  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Mailing a letter to an MP is free; no stamp or postage is needed! Upon receipt of the letter, if your MP is not in Parliament, the mail is automatically forwarded to them.

## Emailing

To find the email address of your MP, go to the [House of Commons website](#) and type in your postal code. You can then look at the webpage of your MP and find their email address there.

## Top writing tips

- **Be concise** – aim for your letter to be no longer than one and a half pages and your email to be no more than 3-4 paragraphs.
- **Keep to the point** – focus on one issue and don't try to cover too many things in one message.
- **Check your MP's correct title** – Most MPs prefer to be addressed as 'MP' or "Member of Parliament." However, some MPs may be given jobs in the government that come with a title such as "Honourable Minister" or "Secretary of State," etc. You can check by looking up your MP on the official [House of Commons website](#). You can also check which official address to use by following the Canadian Government's [styles of address](#).
  - Examples:
    - Dear MP Greg Fergus
    - Dear Honourable Minister Anita Anand
    - Dear Secretary of State Randeep Sarai
- **Tell them you're a constituent** – Include your postal code to indicate that you live in their riding. If you're writing a letter, include your full address – so that your MP knows you are a constituent and where to send the response.
- **Use our resources** – Not sure what to write about? Refer to our current [call to action](#) to find out what issue is urgent right now and learn the facts and read the stories related to that issue, all of which you can use in your letter!
- **You don't need to know everything** – Often people will feel like they can't write to their MP about an issue they are not an expert on. Don't let that stop you! Check out [our website](#) or other reputable organizations to get the information you need about a topic. They have done the research and would love for you to use it when writing to your MP!
- **Proofread!** – Remember to review your letter for any grammatical or factual mistakes. It is very important to confirm that your MP's name is spelled correctly and that you refer to them by the appropriate title.

# how do you structure your message to be the most impactful?

**Step 1. Introduction.** If this is your first letter to your MP, you will want to start by introducing yourself and sharing why you care about the issue that you are raising. If you have a personal connection to the topic of your letter, then this is a great way of engaging your MP and conveying your passion and commitment. Remember to acknowledge your MP for any supportive actions that they may have already taken – MPs rarely hear the words “thank you” from their constituents.

**Step 2. Use the EPIC format.** The acronym “EPIC” is a useful way to remember how to structure the main part of your letter or email. After the introductory paragraph, follow this structure:

**E = Engage your MP.** Get your MP’s attention with a dramatic fact, relatable story, or passionate statement. If you are able to, share a personal story as well.

**P = State the problem.** Paint a vivid picture of the problem and its causes. Use some facts and statistics to help explain the issue but try to focus on the human element. Who is it impacting? How widespread or serious is it? Why is it crucial to solve this problem?

**I = Inform the MP about the solutions.** What needs to happen to fix this problem? If you can, give examples of how and where it has worked, how it is cost-effective, and how it has benefited the poorest. But remember you don’t have to know everything. Our [call to action](#) always outlines solutions that you can share.

**C = Call to Action.** Now that you’ve engaged your MP, presented the problem and informed them of a solution, you need to let them know what you want them to do about it. Make the action concrete and specific.

**Step 3. Ask for a response.** Make sure to be clear on how they can get in touch with you – a written response by mail or email is ideal!

## what can you do afterwards?

Pressing “send” or putting your letter in the mail is not the end of your action!

**Step 1. Congratulate yourself and amplify it.**

You're amazing! You have taken one of the most impactful actions to help generate the political will to end poverty. Now is the time to brag and amplify this accomplishment.

If you wrote a letter, take a photo of yourself mailing it and post it on social media! Or post about what you wrote in your email to inspire others to join you. Don't forget to tag your MP!

### **Step 2. Follow up with your MP.**

If you haven't had an acknowledgement of your letter or email after a couple of weeks, call your MP's office to confirm that they have received it. You can find your MP's phone number on the [House of Commons website](#).

### **Step 3. Report back on your actions.**

Fill out the [report](#) to let the Results office know you've written to your MP. When you receive a response from your MP, make sure to also inform the Results office of this through the ["a parliamentarian wrote back to me" form](#) so that the information can be compiled.

Knowing that you have taken this action helps us demonstrate that there is grassroots support for the issue you are writing about. There is also an annual merit badge for volunteers who take on a certain number of parliamentary actions, and so we want to hear about it!

### **Step 4. Be encouraged!**

Even if the response from your MP isn't what you had hoped for, or you didn't get a response at all, don't be down heartened. The truth is real change doesn't happen overnight, but your emails or letter adds to a growing number of Canadians calling for change.

The fact that you reached out makes an impact, and you may have planted a seed that you can grow in future interactions with your MP. Every action strengthens the movement. It is the strength of the Results network that drives change, and by writing that letter or email you have directly taken part in that collective effort.

### **Step 5. Keep engaging!**

There are lots of other ways to keep connected with your MP. You can:

- Follow them on social media
- Subscribe to their newsletter if they have one (search for their website – they usually have one and will advertise their newsletter there)
- Attend their events. Many MPs have standing community meetings and/or community events, which will be advertised on their website and social media

- Call or email their office to set up a meeting with your MP to talk directly to them about your concerns