



Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada
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Politician Visit Backgrounder

Introduction

With the summer season approaching, co-ops across Ontario are planning summer socials, barbeques, and other events. It's the perfect time to invite your political representatives for a visit.

Inviting a politician

- **One co-op contact.** Determine who will be the one point of contact representing the co-op. That person should be able to give their email and phone number, and be able to check for messages for a quick reply. (This person will also need to know the email and phone number of the politician's contact person.)
- **Use our template.** In this package, a template email has been included for you to send to politicians to invite them to your event. Just fill in the particulars of the event and send out the email.
- **Where to reach them.** When contacting MPs and MPPs, be sure to email their constituency office, because scheduling for events in the riding is usually handled there. Your main contact will likely be a staff person.

Your municipal representatives (city, town, region, or county) will have different ways of handling invitations. For larger cities like Toronto, politicians will have a staff person who schedules events. For most other municipalities, politicians schedule their own events. Your main contact could be either a staff person or the politician.

- **Can't find them?** If you can't find online the right email or mailing address for politicians, just contact [Douglas Wong](#) at CHF Canada, Ontario Region and he'll assist you.

Scheduling the visit

Remember: politicians really *do* want to meet with constituents, especially when they're already in a group. Keep these tips in mind:

- **Please be understanding and accommodating.** A politician's schedule is a busy one, especially when they still have business on Parliament Hill or at Queen's Park. Rest assured, they will try to attend your event if they can. Be sure to thank them for their time.

- **Send invitations to politicians as soon as possible.** This is to ensure they are available. Feel free to include a poster advertising your event. If you prefer, you can use the template to write a letter and send it with the poster by regular mail.
- **Follow up by phone.** If you do not receive any confirmation from their office, you should phone – 2 to 5 business days after your last contact with them.

When you do phone, ask for the assistant responsible for the politician’s schedule. *Please be understanding of the assistant:* sometimes they deal with hundreds of emails a day and your invitation may be on a long list to be processed.

- **Confirm.** One to two days before your event, you can email the office again to confirm the politician’s attendance and the particulars of the event.

At the event

- **Make the politician feel welcome.** Many summer events are informal gatherings of friends and neighbours, like BBQs. Help make the politician feel as though they’re part of the group.
- **Introduce them.** You can make an announcement, or walk them around and introduce them. Help make the personal connection between the politician and your fellow members. Tell them if they’re meeting a Board member, staff, a long-time member, a gardener, a recent high school grad, etc.

Address politicians as “Mr., Mrs. or Ms.” unless they tell you to address them by their first name. If the politician is a government minister, address them as “Minister.” If you have any questions on what the politician prefers, check with the Ontario Region office.

- **Treat them like a guest in your home.** The politician is taking time from their schedule to visit your co-op and you are their host. Let members know ahead of time to be polite and on-topic. Encourage them to interact with politicians, asking them questions and engaging them on co-op issues. Your personal co-op stories are always welcome – they stick in their memories more than any statistic. Remind members that our goal is to make the politician a co-op champion.

Be prepared!

You and your members should know a few things about the politician before their visit. A quick search on the politician’s website or Wikipedia will definitely help. Being prepared demonstrates a level of care and professionalism that will set your co-op apart from other community groups.

Your co-op members should know:

- The politician’s name
- The politician’s political party (federal and provincial only)
- The level of government the politician represents; are they a federal MP, provincial MPP, or municipal mayor, councillor/alderman, warden, etc.

- Whether they're an elected politician or a candidate for an upcoming election
- Whether they're in government (part of the governing party) or in opposition (any non-governing party)
- Whether they're a minister
- Whether they are on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram

Speeches

- **Politicians should be offered a time to speak at the event.** Give the specific details in the invitation.
- **Have somebody introduce them.** It doesn't have to be long. This person sets the tone for the other members by being welcoming and giving the politician their attention.
- **Have somebody thank them.** Again, it doesn't have to be long. A good time to pose for photos!
- **Are other people speaking?** Individual speeches should be 3 to 5 minutes long. Please make these time limits known to the other speakers before the speeches begin.

Tours

Some politicians are genuinely interested in learning about your co-op and may want a tour of the co-op.

- **Clarify with the politician's staff.** Find out what the politician is interested in doing during their visit and make your best attempt to accommodate.
- **Check with staff or board.** Please check with staff or board about where the tour can take place, which areas to avoid, and who to include. CHF Canada staff can help you plan your tour.

Social Media

If you hadn't already, take a picture of the politician with some co-op members and share it on social media. **Be sure to tag the politician** and CHF Canada: @chfcanda on Twitter and CHF_Canada on Instagram.

After the Event

Be sure to thank the politician and their staff as they leave, then walk them towards their transport. The event organizer should send a thank you by email or mail, as soon as the event is over. A hand-written note is a special way to say thanks!

If you have any questions about politician visits, please contact Douglas Wong (Program Manager, Government Relations): dwong@chfcanda.coop or by phone at 1-800-268-2537, ext. 801.

Politician Invitation Template

Dear **[politician's name]**,

I am emailing from **[co-op name]** co-op on **[street name/intersection]** in your riding. We are having a **[event]** on **[date, leave bolded]** from **[start time]** to **[end time]** and would like you to attend.

This represents a great opportunity for you to speak to our **[number of members]** members living in the co-op about your role as our local representative and the issues that matter to them.

We understand that you have a busy schedule, but we would love for you to deliver some short remarks (between five and ten minutes) to our members between **[start time of speakers]** and **[end time of speakers; 15 minute total, max]**. If this time conflicts with your schedule, please let us know.

If you are able to attend, please let us know by email at **[email address of co-op contact]** or by phone at **[phone number of co-op contact]**.

Thank you and we look forward to having you at our **[event]**.

Sincerely,
[co-op contact]