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## Invitation to contact your Member of Parliament

### Why should you do it?

Discussion and decision about the federal budget take place all year long, depending on the priorities that are determined in part by the concerns and issues that matter to MPs. The more MPs hear about a topic, the more likely they are to talk about it in Ottawa. Talking to your MP about scientific research funding puts that issue on their radar.

Your MP is your representative in Ottawa. Showing him or her that basic research funding matters to his or her constituents makes this issue relevant to them.

Initiating a discussion with your MP is a good way to establish a relationship that could bring your representative to turn to you if questions about research come up.

You are as much of a resource for your MP as he or she is a resource for you. Most MPs welcome discussions with their constituents, and you can learn a lot about decision making in Ottawa through your discussions with elected officials.

### When should you do it?

It is always a good time to talk to your MP. However, summer is particularly good time, as most MPs are back in their ridings for the summer months. It is also the time when the first chance to influence the next budget occurs. An MP that you meet in his/her riding is more likely to talk about research funding to his or her colleagues when they return to Ottawa in the Fall, when the major orientations of the budget are being defined.

### What message should you convey?

You must show your MP that you are working for all Canadians. Here are some talking points you could use. You can use examples from your own research laboratory experience to make this more relevant. How many highly qualified employees have you trained, where do they work now? What discoveries have you made? What does your research aim to understand?

- Innovations and cures for disease, benefiting our entire society always start with fundamental research.
- Fundamental research is among the highest-yield investments in Canada's future that our government can make
- Fundamental research in Canada drives the discoveries that fuel an innovative economy.



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- Reinvestment in fundamental science today is critical to maintain Canada's hard-won reputation as a nation of scientific excellence.
- Science goes hand in hand with training of the highly qualified personnel that contribute to Canada's innovation economy. It is an investment in the next generation of leaders required so that Canada can lead the world in the new knowledge-based economy.
- Research is how we understand the natural world and society, what problems we face, and develop the knowledge and tools to address them.
- Reinvigorating fundamental science would require investing a very small percentage of our GDP in the future of a highly educated workforce and fuel a discovery pipeline which is the bedrock of an innovative society.

## What objectives should you reach for?

Your objective should be to build a relationship with your MP. You may not convince your MP during your first meeting to become a champion for science but showing openness to understand their point of view is a first step in building a lasting relationship.

Science advocacy is a long game. You can not meet with your MP once, and consider the job done. There is a new budget every year, and funding changes based on different priorities identified throughout the year.

A long-term objective is to make sure science funding remains a priority independently of the party in power. MPs are up for election every four years.

A short-term objective is to get your MP to view the positive value of investing in scientific research in the next budget, as this has positive fallback in his or her constituency.

Your MPs will submit a letter to the Dept. of Finance with specific budgetary asks for their riding. You can ask your MP to include science funding in this letter.

## What should you talk about with your MP?

Thank your MP for the federal funding you have received and explain what you do with this funding.



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Share your story. Present your research in general terms, highlighting your main objectives. If your MP is interested and asks for this, give more details. This should not be a lecture, but more of a conversation.

Your MP's background may be very different from yours, so he or she may not know how research is conducted or funded. Explain what you do.

Explain where your funding comes from, and what this pays for – how many people you employ, for example, or what the equipment you buy allows you to achieve.

You can highlight the jobs your students and trainees landed after leaving your laboratory.

If you order from local businesses, mention them.

If your research has links to a brain disease, you can talk about the Canadians that your work has the potential to help.

Inviting your MP to visit you in your lab is a good way to allow him or her to meet members of your laboratory and see where the funding goes.

If you receive federal funds, you work for all Canadians. Explain how you do this by making it relevant to your MP.

If your MP is Liberal, explain how Science's 'win' in the 2018 budget will translate to improvements to their constituents; share stories of how the increase in the last budget will benefit Canadians; MPs need to tell their constituents what that increase in science funding has done for them.

Your MP should leave the meeting feeling positive about scientific research.

## How should you follow-up afterwards?

As your goal is to build a relationship with your MP, make sure to write a thank you letter or email after your meeting, thanking him or her for the meeting and inviting them to contact you again in the future, or to visit your laboratory. You should do this on the evening of the meeting, or the next day.

The person who will answer your email will most likely be a staff member of your MP, rather than your MP. Staffers are important people to know and to talk to. They are the ones who talk to the MPs every day, and who help define their schedule.



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## What benefits will you get from this?

By meeting your MP, you will make him or her more aware of the impact and importance of research for Canada and make them more inclined to support increased federal funding of research. Building this relationship will also give you more insight on the work of elected officials, and the way decisions are made in Ottawa.

The level of support for scientific research in Ottawa will have an impact on the amount of money that will go towards funding research in the federal budget, year after year.

## How to find and contact your MP

You can find your MP on this website:

<http://www.noscommunes.ca/Parliamentarians/fr/members>

It is more efficient to contact your MP's office by phone than by email.

Tell the staff member who answers the phone

1. who you are,
2. how your work is funded by the federal government,
3. that you would like to first thank your MP for this funding, and
4. that you would like to meet your MP to show him/her the research that is being done with these federal funds in his or her riding (or by one of their constituents, if your research laboratory is outside the riding).

Note that your MP's staff will most likely be the people you will be interacting with the most. These are very important people, who talk to the MPs every day about the requests and conversations they have with constituents.

## Know your MP

You can learn a little bit more about your MP by visiting

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members> (official site)

<https://openparliament.ca/> (non official)



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## Report on your meeting and let us know how it went

Let us know how your meeting went! Send us an email at [advocacy@can-acn.org](mailto:advocacy@can-acn.org). Let us know what worked, what did not, so that we can improve this invitation for next year!

## References / Resources

This guide was built based on these great resources

<http://www.acechr.ca/summerofsciencecan.html>

<http://www.faseb.org/Science-Policy--Advocacy-and-Communications/Become-an-Advocate/Advocacy-Tool-Kit/Share-Your-Story.aspx>

<https://supportthereport.ca/resources/>

[https://evidencefordemocracy.ca/sites/default/files/federal\\_budget\\_toolkit\\_-\\_e4d.pdf](https://evidencefordemocracy.ca/sites/default/files/federal_budget_toolkit_-_e4d.pdf)

## Other websites

<https://www.sciencepolicy.ca/>

<https://evidencefordemocracy.ca/>

<http://www.sp-exchange.ca/>