



HOW TO VISIT YOUR MPP

Meetings matter: Meeting with a politician is one of the most influential things you can do to advocate for the protection of bees and other wildlife. Meetings carry much more weight than signing a petition, sending an email or writing a letter. Remember, politicians are elected to represent their constituents, so meetings with member of their electorate, listening to their concerns and taking action on them is part of their everyday work.

To make your visit as successful as possible here are some tips:

1. **Make an appointment:** You can start by sending an email to your MPP's electorate office and then if you don't hear back within a couple of days you can follow up with a telephone call. Explain that you would like to meet with your local Member to discuss your concerns about the health of Ontario's bees. The staffer who receives your call may ask you where you are from and who will be attending the meeting.
2. **Plan your meeting:** Bring others with you, but not too many. A good rule of thumb is no more than three or four, with as many as possible being from the politician's riding. A 15 – 30 minute time slot will normally be set aside for your meeting. After introductions, your MPP will invite you to share your concerns.
3. **Plan your talk.**
 - a. **Share your experience.** If you or anyone in your group has personal experience with beekeeping or examples which connect the issue to your MPP you may want to start by sharing this information and why it is important to you and the politician's community. Local statistics and stories are important; so don't be afraid to humanize the issue.
 - b. **Present your case,** but keep to two or three key points. (See talking points sheet)
 - c. Then **get to the point;** let them know that you want these pesticides removed from the market. Here are some sample questions:
 - i. Ontario has lost thousands of hives in both 2012 and 2013 that Health Canada has confirmed were the result of exposure to neonicotinoid pesticides in soy and corn planting. With the upcoming planting season only weeks away, why isn't Ontario doing anything to prevent another round of bee kills in 2014?
 - ii. Health Canada and other studies have shown significant amounts of persistent neonicotinoid pesticides in water and soil samples across Ontario. With over 4 million acres treated annually with these pesticides, why hasn't Ontario declared this an urgent environmental problem?

- iii. As a result of acute and chronic neonicotinoid pesticide poisoning, beekeepers are losing their bees. Is the Government of Ontario willing to ban these toxic chemicals or are they just going to sit back and wait for another agricultural industry to fail?
- d. **Wrap up.** When the meeting is coming to a close, thank the MPP for meeting with you and confirm what you and he/she have each agreed to do. Leave materials such as the FAQ's or other materials you feel would be helpful.
- e. **Follow-up.** Send a thank you email or note after the meeting. If you offered or were asked to provide material, be sure and send it. (OBA office can help with this) Keep track of your MPP's actions; did they follow through on his or her promise? If not ask for an explanation. If so, express appreciation.

Final tips:

- Keep it non-partisan. Remember we are working on behalf of bees, not a political party; so keep the discussion on the merits of the issue.
- Don't get too comfortable. Remember friendliness doesn't mean agreement. And don't mistake 'concern' with support.
- Cultivate a good relationship with political staff. They can often make the difference between success and failure.
- Let the OBA know how it goes.