



Meeting with your Member of Parliament (MP) Toolkit

What are MP meetings?

MP meetings are opportunities to visit your Member of Parliament's office and meet with your MP or their staff. When you meet with your MP, you use your voice and power as constituents to influence the policies, positions, and programs of elected officials. A major goal of these meetings is to draw attention to an issue and direct the elected official who serves your riding towards a solution you present. Meetings focused on global health draw attention to inequities in health systems across the globe, and SPIHC can help you craft an "ask"—a proposed solution—to some of these specific issues.

Why meet with your MP?

The belief that health is a fundamental human right is at the core of Partners In Health's mission. We have evidence that people living in poverty can successfully be treated for both complex and preventable diseases, yet many people still lack access to quality care. As an organization, we strive to do whatever it takes to provide high-quality health care in communities around the world to advance global health equity and social justice.

Becoming an activist is one of the most powerful ways to support PIH and the movement for global health equity.

As a constituent and informed community member, you have the power to help bring about measurable change in both policy and funding for health initiatives. Members of Parliament can influence Canada's international assistance and global health priorities. It is critical that we take our message to MPs to advocate for decisions that strengthen health systems and advance the right to health.

MP meetings are an opportunity to persuade your representatives to support vital programs. They also serve as an educational tool for you and your chapter: you will learn about important political processes and become a better-informed and more active community member. When chapters come together to deliver a unified, timely message to our MPs, we act as an effective force for change.

Through collective action, we will harness the power of our communities to influence the people, policies, and programs that hold the potential to advance the human right to health. With SPIHC chapters working together across Canada, we can mobilize collectively for global health equity.

How to schedule a meeting with your MP

- **Step one: Decide which MP you'd like to meet with**

Start with the MP who represents your riding. You can look them up by postal code using the House of Commons' [Find Members of Parliament tool](#).

Do some research to find out about their political history and priorities. Look up which committees they sit on and their voting history on relevant issues. Talk to your mentor or PIH Canada staff to find out if someone in your area has a particularly important role in a current campaign.

- **Step two: Decide when you'd like to meet with your MP**

PIH Canada staff can help you determine the best time to deliver a particular message to your MP. This timing will take into account relevant parliamentary and budget processes. Attend webinars and check with your mentor or PIH Canada staff to find out more about specific campaign timelines. You should also research when important committee hearings or votes are occurring.

Once you understand the campaign timeline, decide on a strategic time when you can turn out a strong showing. Although only one person is required for a meeting, attending with others can help you feel more supported and demonstrate shared concern about the issue. It's also more fun! Talk with your chapter to find a variety of dates that might work, and consider inviting allied organizations that support the work of PIH Canada and SPIHC.

If you are trying to meet with the MP themselves at their constituency office, ask when they will be in the riding. Weeks when the House of Commons is not sitting may offer opportunities for local meetings, but always confirm availability with the office. Consult the [House of Commons sitting calendar](#) when planning.

- **Step three: Set up a meeting with your MP**

1. **Call your MP's office to schedule a meeting.** For a local meeting, make sure you are calling their constituency office. Find the office's contact information on their website or parliamentary profile. The main number listed may be for their Ottawa office, so double-check.
2. **Be open to meeting with staff.** MPs have busy schedules and may not be available themselves. This is okay! You can still have an effective meeting with a member of their staff. You can ask whether a staff member from the Ottawa office who handles global health, international assistance, or a topic relevant to the campaign can join by phone or video.
3. **Follow up on your request.** You may be asked to email the person responsible for scheduling. If so, follow up by phone if you do not hear back. If you are having trouble, ask your mentor or PIH Canada staff for guidance.
4. **Explain who you are and what you would like to discuss.** When you email the scheduler or staff member, mention who you are, who you represent, who will attend the meeting—for example, four SPIHC members and two representatives from an allied organization—and which issues you would like to discuss.
5. **Near the date of the meeting, call or email** to confirm the date, time, and location or virtual meeting details.

How to prepare for a meeting with your MP

1. **Do some basic research on your MP.** Knowing about the issues and communities that are important to them will help you tailor your message to their interests.
2. **Decide who is attending the meeting.** Get firm commitments from SPIHC chapter members and members of allied organizations who are interested in attending. Where possible, include constituents who live in the riding. We recognize that students may have connections to both their home community and the community where they study. Be clear about those connections when introducing yourselves.
3. **Check in with your mentor or PIH Canada staff,** and review webinars and toolkits. Campaign guidance will help you craft a clear ask for your meeting. You should also check in with other chapters in your area, if there are any, to make sure you are delivering a consistent message and coordinating your efforts to follow up on each other's meetings and reach multiple important offices.
4. **Set an agenda.** During your meeting, you will want to address a number of key points. See the sample agenda below and use it as a template.
5. **Assign speaking roles.** Everyone in the meeting should introduce themselves at the beginning. Assign specific people to introduce PIH Canada and our work, introduce SPIHC as a network, discuss the background and importance of the current campaign issue, and make the firm ask. Storytelling or sharing anecdotes should also be specifically assigned. Knowing who is speaking, what they are covering, and in what order will make the entire process smoother and help you feel more confident.
6. **Also assign at least one person to take detailed notes** so you can report back to your mentor and PIH Canada staff, debrief, and follow up after the meeting.
7. **Practice!** Once you have assigned speaking roles, run a mock meeting. Have each person practise their part—even introductions! Make sure everyone is clear, articulate, and within reasonable time constraints. This will help you feel and sound more confident on the day of the meeting. It may seem silly, but don't skip this step!
8. **On the day of the meeting, arrive a little early** so you can go over your roles again before walking into the office. It is a great way to reaffirm your confidence before the meeting begins.
9. **Print your leave-behind materials.** Check with PIH Canada staff for campaign materials that summarize the key message and ask. Bring copies to leave with your MP or their staff, and refer to them while presenting the issue. It is always helpful to have extra copies just in case.
10. **Breathe!** It is normal to feel a little nervous, especially before your first meeting. If you have prepared well, practised your part, and organized your materials, you will be ready to go.

At the meeting

1. **Be confident.** You have prepared, and your concerns matter. Don't worry if you are nervous; representing constituents and listening to their concerns are important parts of an MP's role.
2. **If you are asked a question you are unprepared to answer,** simply let them know that you will check with PIH Canada staff and get back to them—and then do that! It is okay not to know everything.
3. **Take notes.** Without detailed notes, you will not have the necessary material to properly follow up and report back. Record the tone of the meeting, any questions or concerns, and any commitments made by the MP, their staff, or your chapter.
4. **Collect business cards or contact details from the staff members you meet.** If you meet with more than one staff member or office, start building a list of parliamentary contacts for your chapter to use in the future.
5. **Make a plan to follow up through email, phone, or another meeting.** If they have committed to an action—signing a letter, contacting a colleague, or raising an issue—decide during the meeting how you will know whether they have followed through.
6. **Take a picture!** If you meet with a staff member but the MP is also in the office, ask whether they can step out for a moment to take a picture with your group. This can also be an opportunity to make a quick introduction and briefly share your ask with the MP themselves.
7. **Send your pictures to students@pihcanada.org.**

After the meeting

1. **Follow up with the MP and/or their staff.** This is very important! Follow-up helps turn your meeting into action. Assign someone in your chapter to lead the follow-up process. In a short email afterwards, thank them for meeting with you. If they later follow through on a commitment they made during the meeting, thank them again. If they had a question you could not answer, ask your mentor or PIH Canada staff, or do some research, and then get back to them. Check in regularly to see whether they have followed through on their commitments, and provide pressure and guidance as needed. Your first meeting is just the beginning. Much of our work will be done through follow-up: emails, further meetings, calls, actions, and escalating pressure to remind them that we are here for the long haul and will hold them accountable.
2. **Report back to the network so we can keep track of our communications and progress across SPIHC.** Without knowing what everyone has done, we cannot plan the next step in the campaign! Share feedback with your mentor and PIH Canada staff, and let other chapters in your area know how the meeting went.

Tips for getting your email read

1. **Be timely.** Contact the office ahead of your preferred meeting dates and offer several options. Scheduling practices vary, so ask how far in advance the office prefers to receive requests and be prepared to follow up.
2. **Include relevant data.** Staff may scan the email for information that is directly relevant to their work. Is the main point of your meeting to discuss Canada's global health funding? Say so, and illustrate why it matters with one or two current, sourced facts from the campaign materials.
3. **Work on the subject line.** The subject line should be short and clear. Aim for six words or fewer and get right to the point. For example: "Constituent meeting request: global health."
4. **Keep it short.** Take the time to craft a concise email. If someone has to scroll more than twice, it is probably too long. Staff may read your message on a phone, so keep that in mind.
5. **Include relevant links.** Link to relevant articles and the [PIH Canada website](#) so staff can explore who we are. Include links to campaign briefs or your leave-behind materials so staff can refer to them when preparing a briefing.
6. **Use links where possible instead of attachments.** If you need to send an attachment—for example, a leave-behind document after a meeting—send it as a PDF.
7. **If you don't get a response, follow up.** Reply to your original message with a brief note: "I wanted to follow up on my meeting request. Would your office be available next Wednesday or Thursday to discuss Canada's global health funding priorities?"

Sample agenda

1. **Introductions:** Everyone at the meeting should have a chance to introduce themselves, their role in SPIHC or the organization they represent, and why they care about these issues. A designated member should introduce Partners In Health Canada and our mission and work.
2. **Acknowledgements:** Take a moment to acknowledge your MP for any previous action on relevant issues. If they have been a champion for global health, let them know that you appreciate it and look forward to their continued support. Everyone likes to feel appreciated and needed. If you are meeting with a staff member, you can acknowledge the work of the MP and their office. If you know that the particular staff member played an important role in previous efforts, thank them personally as well.
3. **Presentation of issues:** This is your chance to discuss the issues for which you are seeking support. Keep things clear and concise. Use personal anecdotes and/or stories from PIH's work; storytelling can be a powerful tool to demonstrate the importance of your request. This is a good time to refer to your leave-behind materials.
4. **Making the ask:** Make a clear, targeted request for a specific action. Work with your chapter and mentor, using materials provided by PIH Canada staff and your own research, to develop a tailored ask for your MP that advances our shared campaign goal. Ask for their response during the meeting. If they are unwilling or unable to make a commitment, set a date to follow up. Remember to record questions, objections, promises, and concerns.
5. **Plan for follow-up:** During the meeting, agree on how you will follow up on commitments made by either side.