

MEETING WITH YOUR MLA

Meeting face-to-face with your MLA is one of the most powerful and effective means of having government listen, understand and act. Most MLAs are quite willing and interested in meeting with their constituents. Meeting directly, or during COVID-19 through a video conference (like ZOOM) is more effective than emails or phone calls. However, if you can't arrange to meet in person or by video conference, then a phone call to the MLA's office and if not a phone call, an email would be the next best approach. Background information on the issues and a one-page list of actions we are seeking that you can leave with your MLA are available through the links provided.

THE BACKGROUND DOCUMENT IS FOR YOU, THE ONE-PAGE LIST OF ACTIONS IS FOR YOUR MLA.

If possible, we would suggest bringing with you up to two other supportive friends/allies/family members to the meeting. The first preference is to bring other constituents with you but if not, then other supporters who share your interests are fine. This way the MLA gets to know that the issues you would like to see addressed also concern other Albertans and in every constituency. And if there is not someone else to go with you then you should still absolutely ask for a meeting with your MLA.

Again, we can assure you that meeting with your MLA is the most effective means of having the government and opposition parties address our common hopes and concerns. **Each one of you taking the time to meet personally with an MLA signals to a politician that there are hundreds of others or more with the same interest in a better life for individuals with developmental disabilities.** It's important for MLAs to learn as well that you have many roles as a contributing Albertan (e.g., employee, business owner, parent, volunteer, etc.), in addition to being a family member of someone with a developmental disability. By introducing yourself in this way it enables the MLA to appreciate the range of your community connections and engagement.

If families, with their allies, were to meet with every MLA in the province, this would have a substantive impact. It will send the message that there are tens of thousands of Albertans that expect this government to keep its promises and make decisions that positively impact their family members, friends, colleagues and peers with developmental disabilities. In meeting with government MLA's, you are asking them to assure the budget being developed for next year improves or at the very least sustains funding and supports for children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families or preferably improves those supports. For opposition members you are asking for their support in keeping government accountable in ensuring individuals with developmental disabilities are not forgotten or negatively impacted further given the pandemic.

Asking for a meeting is a relatively simple and straightforward process best accomplished, as noted above, by calling the MLA's constituent office to ask for a meeting – an email follow-up would be fine. Be clear you want to meet with **YOUR** MLA directly and not a staff member. You will likely be given 30 minutes, which is all you should need.

If there is an additional issue important to you, that we haven't identified, then you should feel free to raise it as well. If your MLA asks a question and you're not sure of the answer, simply say so and let them

know you'll get back to them with an answer to their question. Please contact us and we'll be happy to provide you with the information you need to respond to your MLA.

Don't be discouraged if your MLA isn't immediately supportive or appreciative of the issues and the need for action. What is of critical importance is the number of MLAs that have heard the same message and that you've taken the time and effort to meet with your MLA. By doing so you're making a difference.

You can find out who your MLA is and their contact information by clicking on this link [Alberta Legislative Assembly Members](#).

This next step is important. We need to know if you've asked for a meeting, when the meeting is scheduled, who is attending and then later we need you to share with us how the meeting went. If we know that every MLA or close to every MLA has had a meeting with families, we are in a much better position to secure the funding, policies and practices that will enhance the lives of children and adults with developmental disabilities on a daily basis. Please complete the [feedback form](#) to provide us with this information and then email this form to Tara-Lee LaRose, Executive Assistant at tlarose@inclusionalbarta.org.

A few things to remember:

- 1) When introducing yourself always mention your multiple roles in community in addition to being the parent or family member of someone with a developmental disability.
- 2) As part of your introduction always share a photo (one on a phone or iPad is fine) of the person(s) you care about with the MLA. You can also have the person with a developmental disability accompany you, if that is appropriate.
- 3) Acknowledge what is being done well in the province and your desire for Alberta to build on this and move forward from there. Whatever the remaining challenges, Alberta's Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) and its Family Managed Supports (FMS) and AISH were among the most supportive in Canada until very recently. We have more inclusive post-secondary education opportunities in Alberta than anywhere else in the world and a focus on employment, such as Inclusion Alberta's Rotary Employment Partnership which has created over 600 jobs to-date. We are at serious risk however, as you will see in the Background document, of further reductions or cuts in supports, services and funding. This government needs to invest in families just as it has chosen to invest billions in other priorities, whether one agrees or not with the government's decisions. An investment in families and their family members with developmental disabilities costs far less than many other current decisions of the government and pays far more in guaranteed returns than other investments.
- 4) Any of the facts referenced in this document are drawn from publicly available materials, so if challenged, simply remind the MLA the facts or figures are publicly available and they're more than welcome to have their staff confirm the accuracy.

5) Do not expect an MLA to agree with you on all or any points or to be able to make immediate changes. Do not despair if they simply repeat the talking points they've been given by government. Regardless of what you might be told by the MLA, if almost every MLA has a meeting with families, this will have a significant impact on their thinking as they prepare for the next budget and future legislative sessions.

6) **Do not** expect your MLA to promise any needed funding. **Do ask** for a promise from your MLA to share your concerns with his or her colleagues, and the Premier and Cabinet

7) Do expect your MLA to listen respectfully to the information you have to share.

8) Expect your MLA to share with you whatever information they have been provided by departmental staff. If there is a difference between what you know and the MLA tells you, remind the MLA that you have first-hand knowledge of what would make a fundamental difference to the life of your family member with developmental disabilities.

9) Ask your MLA to get back to you on what actions he or she has taken.

Thank you for reaching out to your MLA to ensure that the needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities are not forgotten.