**Ontario Election 2014: Engage Your Candidates this Election!**

**Individual Meetings with Candidates**

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| **Pros** | **Cons** |
| * Provide an opportunity for more focused and in-depth conversations
* Can gauge candidates’ interest and potential response to “asks” more readily
* May be easier to organize
 | * Not public events so no opportunity for broader messaging or media coverage
* Could mean multiple meetings throughout the campaign
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Tip: Consider organizing sessions as part of an existing community network or team up with like-minded organizations.

**Getting organized**

**ASK**

Send a letter to each local candidate briefly outlining your organization’s work, your key messages and your election “asks”. Request a meeting with the candidate to discuss these items.

**SCHEDULE**

Follow up with a phone call or visit to the campaign manager. The campaign manager may handle the request or may refer you to another staff member. Negotiate a date, time and location for the meeting. Let the campaign staff know how much time you would like and be prepared to shorten the session if need be.

**PREPARE**

Once the meeting is confirmed, put together a team to attend the meeting. The larger the team, the more organized you’ll need to be at the meeting. It’s helpful to have a mix of staff, board members and, if possible, beneficiaries of your service who can provide personal accounts for impact.

As a group, fine-tune the points that you will raise (the “asks” in your letter), organize them into an agenda and decide who will chair the session and who will speak to which item. The size of the group will guide how long individuals can speak.

* In general, keep the individual presentations to a maximum of three minutes each. More experienced members can help others to organize what they will say.
* Ask for a volunteer to write up the meeting when it’s over so everyone has the plan on paper.

**INFORM**

Tell the campaign staff who will attend the meeting.

**MEET**

Arrive on time and go in as a team.

Have the Chair open the meeting, thank the candidate and briefly outline the purpose of the meeting and the agenda. All participants should introduce themselves.

* From there, the Chair should manage the agenda, making way for the speaker for each item. The candidate or campaign staff may ask questions of individual speakers and the Chair should be able to subtly keep the agenda on track.

Be prepared to be flexible. The candidate may not have time/want to go through the full agenda. The Chair should be able to cut to the chase so that the most important items are discussed.

Finish by thanking the candidate and providing a contact person for further questions or information.

**FOLLOW UP**

Send a thank you letter and follow up on any commitments made.

**HELPFUL RESOURCES**

**Campaign 2000:** [**Election Resource Kit**](http://www.campaign2000.ca/Ontario/2014OntarioElectionResourceKit.pdf)

**On Co-op:** [**Election Toolkits**](http://www.ontario.coop/documents_downloads?search=Enter+Keywords&oldsearch=Enter+Keywords&type=1&category=0&sortby=date)

**Ontario Non-profit Housing Association:** **Election Toolkits**

For more election tools and tips, go to <http://www.theonn.ca/ontario-election-2014>.