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Empowering Connections

A Toolkit for Inviting MPs and Senators



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We value your feedback on this toolkit. Whether you have suggestions for improvement, additional resources to recommend, or insights into what worked well for you, we want to hear from you. Your experiences and perspectives can help us enhance this toolkit for the benefit of the museum sector.

Please share your feedback, comments, or suggestions by emailing us at advocacy@museums.ca.



Photo — Group photo at CMA Hill Day 2023 reception hosted by Senator Patricia Bovey.

Why Engage in Advocacy?

Advocacy is a key activity for museums to raise awareness of their role in society, build support for their work, and influence policies that affect the sector. Engaging with Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators provides an important opportunity to advocate for museums' needs, share insights on issues, and foster connections with decision-makers.

This toolkit, titled “Empowering Connections,” is designed to guide museums across Canada in inviting their MPs or Senators to visit their institutions. Whether you are seeking to raise awareness, garner support, or simply foster a connection with your federal representatives, this step-by-step guide provides the tools, templates, and timelines to make it happen.

From identifying your representatives to crafting the perfect invitation, coordinating participation, and maximizing media engagement, this toolkit aligns with CMA's broader advocacy efforts to empower museums.

Engaging with MPs and Senators is more than a one-time event; it is an ongoing relationship that can lead to meaningful collaboration, support, and impact. We encourage you to adapt this toolkit to your unique context and join us in strengthening the voice of museums in Canada.

Your museum's story matters and sharing it with those who shape Canada's policies can make a real difference.

Good luck on your advocacy journey!

Identifying Your Representatives

The first step is determining who represents you at the federal level. There are two groups of representatives in the Parliament of Canada

Members of Parliament (MPs): MPs are elected by voters in their local electoral district (also known as a riding) to represent that riding in the House of Commons. There are 338 MPs across Canada. When Parliament is in session, MPs spend most of their time in Ottawa focused on parliamentary duties. When Parliament is not sitting, MPs spend time in their ridings meeting with constituents.

Senators: Senators are appointed to represent their province/territory in the Senate. There are 105 Senators with seats distributed based on region. Senators tend to be more active in their home province meeting with stakeholders compared to MPs.

In addition to federal representatives, it is important to understand their specific roles and limitations. In most cases, focusing your advocacy on MPs and Senators is ideal, as they shape national policies and programs relevant to museums. However, engaging provincial/territorial and local representatives can also be beneficial to advance specific community initiatives.



Photo — Delegates meet with government representatives during CMA Hill Day 2023. Top photo, from left to right: Janis Kahentóktha Monture, Taylor Bachrach (MP for Skeena-Bulkley Valley) and Sdahl K'aawas Lucy Bell. Bottom photo, from left to right: Stephanie Danyluk, Alexandra Badzak, Pam Damoff (MP for Oakville North—Burlington) and Robin Etherington.

Empowering Connections

A Toolkit for Inviting MPs and Senators

IDENTIFYING YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

Level of Government	Who They Are	What They Can Do	What They Cannot Do	Illustrative Examples
FEDERAL	MPs and Senators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate federal funding for museums Pass legislation related to heritage, copyright, tax policy etc., that can impact museums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly provide provincial/local funding to museums 	An MP can advocate for museums to receive funding in the federal budget. A Senator can influence the drafting of legislation that enables museum innovation.
PROVINCIAL/ TERRITORIAL	Members of Legislative or National Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide provincial/territorial operating grants and project funding to museums Pass provincial legislation around museum policies, cultural heritage, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly influence federal policies and programs 	A Member of a Provincial Parliament (MPP) can champion increased provincial funding towards museums in the provincial budget.
LOCAL	Mayors, Regional Councillors, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide municipal funding grants to local museums Approve bylaws enabling museum infrastructure projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access federal/provincial level funding 	A city councillor can propose increased funding for a city museum in the municipal budget. A mayor can champion a bylaw enabling expansion of a museum's facilities.

Inviting MPs/Senators: Action Plan and Timeline

#	Description	Suggested Resources	Suggested Timeline
1	Determine the Timing: Consider parliamentary schedules, constituency weeks, recess periods, and local events.	MPs: House of Commons Sitting Calendar Senators: Senate of Canada Calendar & Events	Ongoing
2	Identify Representatives: Find out who represents you at the federal level.	Find your MP Find your Senator	T- 6 weeks
3	Get to Know Them	Take time to review your representatives' official profiles, social media, recent news, and stated priorities. This will help you understand their background, interests and stance on issues relevant to your advocacy goals.	T- 6 weeks
4	Send Invitation: Use a template to send an invitation to MPs.	Sample Invitation Email Template to the MP/Senator's official email address (available on the official profile pages)	T- 5 weeks
5	Reminder: Follow up with the office after sending the initial invitation.	Sample Reminder Email Template	T- 4 weeks
6	Prepare Message: Consider the message you want to convey and programs/request for support you want to emphasize. Consult the CMA Hill Day 2023 one-pager and the broader advocacy section for content.	CMA-Hill Day One Pager Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Museums GLAM Study Key Messages Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions: 2021	T- 4 weeks

INVITING MPS/SENATORS: ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE

#	Description	Suggested Resources	Suggested Timeline
7	Media and Promotion: Alert media, share news about your scheduled meeting, and use social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send a media advisory to local outlets 1-2 weeks before the visit announcing the upcoming engagement Post on your museum's website highlighting the upcoming visit and its significance Share posts on social media platforms 2-3 weeks in advance promoting the visit. Tag the MP/Senator and use relevant hashtags like #MuseumsMatter Send an email blast to museum members and supporters informing them about the visit and its importance. Invite them to follow along on social media. Assign someone to take high-quality photos and videos during the visit to share afterward. Ensure proper media consent forms are signed. Add a banner or signage welcoming the representative to your museum. This makes for great photo ops. Brief frontline staff and volunteers on key messages to convey if engaged by media regarding the visit. 	Ongoing
8	Prepare for Meeting: Confirm details, prepare materials, and have contingency plans for technical difficulties.	Meeting Preparation Checklist	T- 1 week

INVITING MPS/SENATORS: ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE

#	Description	Suggested Resources	Suggested Timeline
9	Reconfirm Meeting: Write to MP/Senator's office reconfirming meeting details.	<p>Confirm Details: Date, Time, Address</p> <p>Send Advance Materials: The MP/Senator staff may ask for materials or agenda in advance</p> <p>Maintain Communication with Staff: Obtain the phone number and email address of the office manager or chief of staff; keep them informed and in the loop regarding all meeting arrangements and updates</p>	T- 5 days
10	Conduct Visit		T- 0 (Day of visit)
11	Follow Up: Thank your MP, send any materials promised, and share updates.	Follow-Up Email Template	T+ 1-2 days
12	Media Engagement: Share highlights from the meeting, thank the MP/Senator publicly, promote advocacy for museums.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Share photos, videos, and key takeaways on social media platforms ◦ Write a blog post or press release summarize the visit ◦ Use hashtags: specific tags related to the MP/Senator ◦ Tag the CMA on Instagram @musecdn, X (formerly Twitter) @musecdn, LinkedIn, and Facebook ◦ Encourage followers to engage and share 	T+ 2-3 days

Ethical and Legal Considerations

When reaching out to MPs and Senators, museums must keep in mind laws and ethical obligations, including:

Charitable Obligations

Museums with charitable status must be non-partisan and ensure advocacy promotes their charitable mission rather than supporting specific parties or candidates. See [Canada Revenue Agency's guidelines](#) on registered charities for more details.

Example: Charitable Organizations

A board member suggests inviting your MP to make a speech at an upcoming gala fundraiser for your museum.

As a charity, avoid overt political endorsements and maintain non-partisanship.

Conflict of Interest Act

This prohibits public office holders from making decisions where they could further their private interests or those of their relatives. When inviting MPs and Senators, avoid offering any gifts, hospitality, or benefits that could be perceived as attempts to curry favor. Read the [Conflict of Interest Act](#) for details.

Elections Act

There are strict rules around involvement in political activities, endorsements, advertising and contributions during election periods. If engaging with MPs/Senators during an election, carefully consult the [Elections Act](#) to avoid violations.

Example: Conflict of Interest Act

During your Senator's visit, you want to give them a framed archival photograph from your museum's collection as a souvenir.

Avoid offering gifts that could be perceived as attempts to gain favour or influence.

Example: Elections Act

Your museum wants to invite your MP to announce a new funding proposal your organization worked on to support non-official languages. The announcement event will take place two weeks before a federal election.

Be mindful of rules around endorsements, contributions, and advertising during election periods.



Lobbying Act

The [Lobbying Act](#) aims to foster transparency around how stakeholders try to influence government decisions. It requires organizations to register if they lobby public office holders and disclose details on their activities. Most non-profit advocacy is exempt. However, if your engagement with MPs/Senators involves extensive lobbying about specific funding or policy changes, it is prudent to consult the Lobbying Act to see if registration is required.

Example: Lobbying Act

Your museum is planning to invite your Senator to visit and requests the Senator help secure a partnership with Parks Canada around an upcoming exhibition.

Extensively lobbying for specific government funding or partnerships may require registration under the Lobbying Act



Samples and Tools

Sample Invitation Template

Subject: Invitation to Visit [Museum Name]

Dear [MP/Senator's Name],

I hope this e-mail finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I am writing on behalf of [Museum Name] located in [City, Province]. We would be honored to invite you to visit our museum and experience firsthand the cultural, educational, and socio-economic impact we have on our community.

About [Museum Name]

[Please include information about the museum, such as its mission, history, notable exhibitions, community involvement, and any other relevant details that you would like to highlight. No more than 250 words]

Details of the Visit:

- Location: [Museum Address]
- Agenda: [Brief Outline of Planned Activities]

During your visit, we would like to showcase our current exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach initiatives. We believe this visit will provide valuable insights into the role of museums in preserving cultural heritage, fostering education, and contributing to local economic development.

We understand your schedule is busy, and we are flexible in accommodating your availability. Please let us know a date and time that works best for you, and we will make the necessary arrangements.

Thank you for considering our invitation. We look forward to the opportunity to share our work with you and discuss ways we can collaborate to support and promote Canadian heritage.

Please feel free to contact me at [your e-mail or phone number] if you have any questions or need further information.

[Your Full Name]
[Your Title]
[Museum Name]
[Contact Information]

Sample Reminder Email Template

Subject: Follow-up: Invitation to Visit [Museum Name]

Dear [MP/Senator's Name],

I hope this e-mail finds you well. I am writing to follow up on our invitation to visit [Museum Name] located in [City, Province]. We extended an invitation on [Date of Initial Invitation], and we are eager to have you experience firsthand the cultural and educational impact our museum has on our community.

About [Museum Name]

[Please include a brief (100-200 words) overview of the museum, highlighting its mission, history, notable exhibitions, community involvement, etc.]

We understand your schedule is busy, and we are flexible in accommodating your availability. If you are interested in visiting our museum, please let us know a date and time that works best for you, and we will make the necessary arrangements.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me at [your e-mail or phone number]. We sincerely hope you will consider our invitation, and we look forward to the opportunity to share our work with you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Title]

[Museum Name]

[Contact Information]

Follow-Up Email Template

Subject: Thank you for your visit to [Museum Name]

Dear [MP/Senator's Name],

I would like to thank you for taking the time to visit [Museum Name] on [Date of Visit]. Your presence and the opportunity to discuss [specific topics or issues] were valuable to us.

[Optional: If there were positive aspects, highlight them here., e.g., "We appreciated your insights on...."]

[Optional: If there were challenges or unresolved issues, address them here, e.g., "We recognize that there were some concerns about..., and we would like to explore further dialogue to address these matters."]

Enclosed, you will find [specific materials or documents promised, if any]. We believe these materials may provide additional context or information related to our conversation.

We are committed to [state your museum's mission or goals] and welcome any further thoughts, questions, or feedback you may have. Please feel free to reach out at your convenience.

Thank you once again for your time and consideration. We look forward to the possibility of continued engagement.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Title]

[Museum Name]

[Contact Information]

Attachments: [List of Documents, if any]

Meeting Preparation Checklist

#	Item	Description	Complete
1	Meeting Agenda	A clear and concise agenda that outlines the topics to be discussed, the time allocated for each item, and the desired outcomes. This helps ensure that the meeting stays focused and productive.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Briefing Document	A document that provides background information on the museum, its mission, key programs, community impact, and specific issues or requests to be addressed during the meeting. This helps the MP/Senator understand the context and priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Talking Points Guide	A guide that outlines key talking points, messages, and supporting data or anecdotes. This will help you articulate your point clearly and persuasively.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Media and Presentation Materials	Visual aids, brochures, videos, or other media that showcase the museum's work, exhibitions, and community engagement. These materials will enhance understanding and create a more engaging experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Rehearsal and Role-Playing	Practice sessions where museum staff rehearse their presentation, engage in role-playing, and receive feedback. This will help build confidence and ensure that your team is well-prepared.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Research MP/Senator	Conduct research on the MP's or Senator's profile, committees, priorities, and interests. Understand their stance on heritage and museum-related issues. This information will help tailor the message and approach to align with their	<input type="checkbox"/>