



RNAO

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers
autorisés de l'Ontario

Making the Most of Your MPP Meeting



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Overview

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) prides itself on its political engagement opportunities. These allow our members to influence the policy agenda while enhancing leadership capacity. Meetings with MPPs are central to moving RNAO's agenda forward and enable our members to see, firsthand, how they can influence decision-makers. Our experience with *Queen's Park on the Road* (QPOR) in 2013 was tremendous and what we learned should be shared as it is a valuable resource for Chapter Presidents, Interest Group Chairs and Policy and Political Action Executive Network Officers (ENO).

Before the meeting

It helps to provide the MPP's office with the RNAO package and agenda three to five business days prior to the meeting. This gives staff time to review the material and, ideally, assist the MPP in preparing for the discussion.

Verify the office address, date, time, and length of the meeting and plan your route in advance. Obtain a staff contact number for that day in case changes occur. Ensure you have the cell phone numbers of other RNAO participants for any last-minute communication, such as traffic delays.

It's a very good idea for the group to connect before the meeting (via teleconference, Skype, or email) to appoint a lead, recorder, and to review the focus of the meeting, choose questions to ask the MPP, and determine the role of each RNAO participant. It also helps to:

- Read the RNAO materials and ensure you understand the key messages to be delivered.
- Prepare a short introduction of yourself, including your skills and your workplace. Think about your message—what is the practice story you can share to inform the MPP about the issue(s) that impacts you and your patients/clients? Is the message also relevant to other workplaces, your RNAO Chapter/Interest Group, and your community?
- Write your key points and practice your narrative so you can deliver your message in a confident and coherent manner.

Review the MPP's website to verify his/her role within their political party. Are they a Minister or Critic? Which committee do they belong to? Note their biography, any press releases, recent speeches, and key issues within the riding. Also check on the party's health policy—look for nursing, primary care, community, and access to care.

- Check with Home Office to learn about the MPP’s participation in past RNAO events.
- Websites that can help you:
 - Legislative Assembly of Ontario:
http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/members/members_detail.do?locale=en&ID=7085
 - Ontario Liberal Party (under Our Team) <http://www.ontarioliberal.ca/>
 - PC Party of Ontario (under Our Team) <http://www.ontariopc.com/>
 - Ontario’s NDP—(under Our Team) <http://ontariondp.com/en/>

Meeting day

Be on time. In fact, try to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the meeting so the group can quickly review the plan.

After introducing the RNAO team, the lead provides a brief overview. Participants make their points and pose key questions already decided on by the group. Listen carefully to the answers and if the MPP misses the point of the question, restate it in a respectful way. If the MPP goes off track, the lead needs to refocus attention back to the questions and matters at hand. If the MPP makes comments that are inconsistent with RNAO’s positions or values, respectfully respond to these during the meeting.

The recorder notes the responses and any requests for information. If time permits after the key messages have been delivered and discussed, extra matters of interest to the MPP can be referenced.

Before the meeting ends, the lead will ask the MPP if there are issues where RNAO can be helpful. Then, the lead will summarize the key points conveyed; review what (if any) follow-up is required; invite the MPP to participate in RNAO’s *Take Your MPP to Work* (TYMTW™) event held each year during Nursing Week; thank him/her by providing a card from the RNAO team (this is a nice touch); exchange business cards to encourage ongoing networking between the MPP and team; and ask for a group photo. Remember to obtain permission to post the photo to any RNAO-related web page (including social media websites) and/or *Registered Nurse Journal*, and be sure to forward a copy to the MPP.

Keep in mind

- Be conscious of etiquette. Use titles such as Mr./Ms./Minister until the MPP informs you otherwise.
- Do not make reference to your personal affiliation to a political party or discuss donations.
- Be respectful and non-partisan. Please remember: RNAO works with all political parties and respects different points of view.

- If an MPP comments on topics unrelated to the platform or not consistent with RNAO's positions or values, do not record them in the report. This way, they are not placed into the public realm, as this could affect relationships Chapters have with their MPPs and have a negative effect on RNAO.
- Keep your comments concise. The lead guides the group to stay on message and on time.

Post-meeting

If possible, debrief immediately after, either off-site or via email and review the main points and impressions. The recorder prepares the report and distributes it to the team for review to confirm key points captured. The report reflects the MPP's responses to the platform issues – whether he/she supports them or not and why. Send the report and photo to smartel@RNAO.ca. Please highlight any follow-up required.

Summary

Meeting with your elected representative provides an opportunity to form a relationship and foster ongoing dialogue about nursing, health and health-care issues with a key decision-maker. This is an important political engagement process for RNAO. We want it to be positive for our members and MPPs alike.

For more information, or to obtain a hard copy of this document, please contact:

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