



LOBBYING:
Building the
Political Foundation
for Tomorrow's Jobs

*United Steelworkers National Policy Conference
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Building
for tomorrow's jobs



On the cover: Jessica Hoyos, daughter of murdered Colombian trade union leader Jorge Dario Hoyos, taking part in the USW lobby campaign against the proposed Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement on Parliament Hill, Spring 2009.

Inside cover: USW members protesting the proposed Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

For many of us, lobbying is something other people do – women and men who wear fancy clothes and buy politicians lunches at expensive restaurants. But the truth is that lobbying, or trying to influence those who make policies that affect our lives, is something anyone can do.

At its simplest, lobbying is simply letting public officials know what you think. You might be trying to reach your member of parliament, a minister, a provincial legislator, a city councillor or a civil servant.

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What is lobbying?

- ▶ The act of telling our policymakers how to change our laws,
- ▶ Working to influence decisions made by policymakers and governments,
- ▶ People talking to people about the kind of society they want,
- ▶ Speaking truth to power, holding governments accountable to the public that elected them and showing those in office the impact of their decisions,
- ▶ Challenging complacency and the status quo and standing up for yourself and your fellow citizens for a better future, and
- ▶ Necessary, challenging, stimulating, inspiring and very effective!

Steelworker lobbying: A strong program and history of influencing the law

The United Steelworkers has an active and ongoing lobbying campaign in Ottawa and in many of the provinces. USW is recognized as one of the most influential players when it comes to protecting workers rights and extending progressive legislation.

USW has been at the centre of passing federal safety legislation with the *Westray Bill*, *Workers First* legislation and stopping some of Stephen Harper's most regressive rollbacks.

Steelworkers have strength in our numbers, our experience and our commitment.

Working together to make change

At times, many of us think that ordinary individuals can't make a difference. It is hard to change laws and policies. But it can be done. Lobbying is easier and more effective when many committed people work together so that one person does not have to know or do everything.

One advantage USW members have is strength in numbers and access to top-notch political professionals committed to working together to find real solutions to our problems.

Although it may seem that lobbying is some mysterious process that takes years to master, it isn't. Lobbying is easy. It's really just asking an elected official to take a position and to vote in a particular way on a piece of legislation. You can learn how to lobby – whom to call, when, and what to say. And USW members and staff will assist and support you through the entire process.

USW activists set up meetings with legislators of all political stripes by phone, promise to take up only a few moments of the MP, MLA or city councillor's time and make a clear and convincing request. Lobbyists are trained in advance, but more importantly, they speak from experience. Always polite, USW political activists are committed to our cause and have respect for the role of elected officials.

Lobbying makes the government work for working people

Maintaining and winning rights at our workplaces, for our families and for our communities require action beyond the bargaining table. Municipal,

provincial and federal laws govern all normal union activity in our workplaces – from collective bargaining, to the right to strike, to access to arbitration, the duty to bargain in good faith, the duty of fair representation, health and safety and more. USW activists may advocate and lobby elected representatives on various issues, including:

- ▶ Pension protection and reform
- ▶ Occupational health and safety
- ▶ Job creation programs and benefits
- ▶ Employment insurance
- ▶ Health care
- ▶ Trade agreements
- ▶ Environmental protection
- ▶ Equality and discrimination

and living standards for everyone, we are also faced with fighting lawmakers who would cut back or take away all the gains we have made. Union members and USW activists have fought many long, hard political battles to achieve these benefits for working people and we will have to work hard to preserve them in the face of current arguments that they are uncompetitive or too expensive to sustain. The continuing conversation about what kind of society we want to build in Canada is too important for union members to ignore.

Lobbying works

Our own history teaches us that patience, preparation and persistence pay off in politics. Past lobbying successes include the decade-long campaign for changes to the Criminal Code that now hold companies, executives and directors criminally accountable for a lack of workplace health and safety. Known as the "Westray Bill," the law was pursued by multiple teams of USW member lobbyists over years of process, changes in government and pressure from employers.

Building solidarity with the activists who came before us

Although we often focus on improving working



National Director Ken Neumann and USW International President Leo W. Gerard with City of Toronto Mayor David Miller at a meeting of the mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative in July 2008.

Another example is the first step toward a full *Workers First* approach to bankruptcy and insolvency laws. A lobby by USW political activists on *Bill C-55* helped lead to changes that put companies' obligations to workers ahead of banks and creditors.

Every day, decisions are made at all levels of government that directly affect the welfare of workers. Get involved in your union's political action initiatives and make a difference. See you in the lobby!

A January 2010 poll by Nanos Research surveyed parliamentarians.

94.3% - said they save contact information and communications they receive from people.

54.5% - said they have profiles on MySpace and/or Facebook.

88% - said they were motivated to act politically on a message that came through in a personal letter, versus about 45% who said they would act based on a form letter.

Ottawa is important, but you don't have to leave town to lobby your elected officials!!

USW members are not only making a difference in Ottawa, but also in our own communities! Each level of government – municipal, provincial and federal – makes decisions that have an impact on our lives, the lives of working people and their families across Canada. Lobbying efforts are needed at each of these levels.

Municipal lobbying – Start close to home

With 4 out of 5 Canadians now living in urban centres, municipal governments are playing an increasingly important role in the Canadian political scene. When city councils adopt Fair Wage Ordinances, partner with federal and provincial governments in infrastructure projects, and implement responsible job-creating procurement policies, they can greatly improve the quality of life for working people in their community.

One thing to remember is that municipal politicians are not organized into political parties. As a result, they are free from the requirement to support a "party line" and can be more flexible in their support for issues. And because more decisions are being made locally, your lobbying can have an immediate, concrete impact on people in your community.

Provincial lobbying

Provincial governments have a lot of power in Canada. Provincial agencies regulate workers compensation, labour relations, agricultural marketing, liquor sales, energy and public utilities. It's also worth noting that, where federal and provincial laws concerning old age, disability and survivors' pensions conflict with each other, the provincial power prevails. With all this power and influence, USW members and all working people need to have our voices clearly heard in our provincial legislatures and legislative assemblies.

Federal lobbying

Since the late 1990s, Steelworkers have been making a difference on Parliament Hill through a lobbying program that has resulted in positive change for working people.

USW's Legislative Office is just a few blocks from

Parliament Hill. Staff monitor and coordinate the progress of legislative initiatives. These initiatives – or campaigns – may be developed by USW activists in concert with the Canadian Labour Congress and other unions, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois. As well, there are government or opposition-sponsored legislative changes that USW members either support or oppose, which require lobbying legislators in all political parties.

These campaigns are coordinated out of the USW Legislative Office. At various critical times, a campaign will involve USW political activists coming to Ottawa, for a day or longer, and as a group delivering our position directly to politicians for a concentrated period of time. USW activists meet with politicians in their Ottawa offices, in their riding offices across Canada, on the street or in the corridors of Parliament Hill.

Ready to get started? A few things to remember...

Tell your personal story

Personal stories are powerful tools for change. Have you ever heard a politician tell an audience about "Mary from Anytown who was hurt at work..."? That's because personal stories are important, memorable and persuasive. Focus on how to tell an elected official that you are concerned about an issue and how it affects you, your family, and your community. People and policymakers can learn from your story and how it relates to a particular issue. Using your own experience to explain your opinion on a specific issue helps others better understand the implications of their decisions. If you are feeling nervous, it can be helpful to practice telling your story to others before meeting with a legislator.

You are the boss

When you visit a lawmaker, always keep in mind

that you are the boss! You and other voters elect the legislators, pay their salaries through your taxes, and live in their area. You should be courteous and never threaten, but in a nice way let the legislator know that they are responsible to and work for the voters in their riding.

Meeting with you is their job, not an interruption

Politicians often have little or no knowledge of the range of opinions on issues, or why we take the positions we do. Lobbying gives politicians the opportunity to understand our views and they are usually grateful for the input. They learn to respect the fact that we are not only representing the best interests of union members and speaking on their behalf, but that we're also taxpayers, consumers, community residents and voters. We're not imposing on our elected representatives by presenting them with our point of view. In fact, it's their duty to know what their constituents feel and acquaint themselves with all sides of an issue.

Talk to all lawmakers, from all political parties!

Although we may have our favourite politicians and political parties, it is also essential to engage those we may not always agree with. It's always easiest to visit with a lawmaker who supports our positions, but it is also essential to lobby all legislators that have the power to make a decision. So, avoid party politics and don't make an issue of your own or the legislators' political party affiliation.

Timing

Timing is important to the success or failure of lobbying efforts. Elections can get in the way,



Parti Québécois leader Pauline Marois supporting USW members demanding Hydro-Québec buy its cables from Quebec manufacturers.

MPs take lengthy recesses from the House of Commons and parliamentary procedure can be manipulated by a series of motions, amendments and other tactics that reflect political parties' strategy on particular issues. Then, sometimes in the blink of an eye, a vote is held and the work of USW lobbyists is either rewarded or set back.

How to lobby effectively

Getting the most out of our lobbying efforts means being smart about identifying our policy objectives and our strategies for achieving them. Whether you are taking part in a federal lobby on Parliament Hill, or want to put pressure on your own MP, MPP, MLA, MNA or city councillor, these tips apply equally to groups and to individuals.

Get acquainted with your legislators. Know as much about them as possible, their backgrounds, their position on issues, voting record if any, and statements made in speeches.

Know your issue: Make sure that before you go you are clear about points you want to make and the action you would like the politician to take. Take advantage of briefing notes about the issue. Often, politicians are only aware of their party's position and not the details of a bill or an issue. As a lobbyist, you can be a source of information.

Know your objectives: Lobbyists should be up front and clear about the position they want the politician to take. Your job is to get them to make a commitment or know clearly why they will not. That kind of information in a face-to-face meeting will help in planning further phases of the campaign.

Set up a meeting. Call the politician's local constituency office or their Ottawa office when Parliament is sitting. Always tell them the purpose of the meeting and how many people are going to be coming. Tell them the meeting will be brief, 15-20 minutes. Steelworkers often lobby in pairs. It adds to an easier flow of conversation when

lobbyists can fill in each other's gaps. Having others with you boosts confidence and comfort.

Be neat and presentable – first impressions are key! Lawmakers may react negatively to anyone dressed in a messy, radical or unkempt way. This may turn them against your cause, regardless of the worth of your ideas.

Be early. Politicians are busy people and their schedules fill up rapidly. Arriving a few minutes early gives you an opportunity to collect your thoughts, organize any presentation materials or leave-behinds as well as to observe the atmosphere in the office.

Be friendly, polite and patient. Don't get sidetracked or interrupt when the legislator is speaking. At the same time, remember your objectives and gently persist to make sure that the issues you intended to raise get discussed.

Be personal. Your biggest asset is your personal experience and opinion. Your presence as an activist is unique and offers the potential to make a strong impact on a politician who has never met you. It is a good sign if the elected official takes our issues personally. It is very important to remember the positions they take and their reasons for doing so – especially if you think they should be met with again.

The ASK – What do you want the legislator to do?

Will she speak in support of your position? Will she vote in a way that supports your position? Each politician lobbied should be asked to satisfy a specific request.

Listen carefully and don't argue. Politicians tend to want to dominate the conversation, often to avoid what they believe you may ask them to do. Be polite and try to keep them focused on your issue. Very important – if you do not have an immediate answer to a question they

may have, promise them you will get the answer. This is a good opportunity to stay in touch and continue to influence them.

Keep things friendly. Maintain a positive relationship with all legislators—they may be in this office or a higher one for decades. Threats and hostile or sarcastic remarks are not productive. Do not create any enemies.

Take notes. This is very important for following up and debriefing.

Don't underestimate email

The Nanos survey suggests email may be the best way to get in touch with Members of Parliament. MPs ranked it higher than face-to-face, mail, phone and fax communication as the way they prefer to hear from constituents.

However, while email may be an entry point, following up is the key to getting meetings with politicians.

Make the visit memorable. Local union activists who have taken part in group lobbying find that politicians like to have their photos taken with people who come to see them. If you have a digital camera, take it with you! As well, politicians appreciate tokens, such as pins or buttons.

Leave information. Thank them for the visit and leave information about your concerns, regardless of the outcome.

Thank you. After the meeting, send a thank you note. Make it personal and end by reminding them of their commitment to take action, or urge them to do so. Once again, offer to provide any additional information along with an invitation to visit your workplace or community.

Debrief. Talk over the experience with your group. Compare impressions. Was it a positive meeting? What did you learn about the politician's views? Did you learn something that could improve future presentations? Make sure you arrange to deliver any extra materials you may have promised or find the answers to any questions that you were unable to answer during the meeting.

Follow up. Make sure the politician honours any commitment to you. If you don't hear anything in a week or so, phone or write. If you have a picture of you or your lobby group with the politician, send it along with a note reminding

them of any commitment that they made to you.

Spread the word! You worked hard and did a successful lobby. Even if the lawmaker didn't make a commitment to support our issues, you took a step toward making change to improve our workplaces, families and communities. Don't forget to tell your fellow co-workers about the lobby and encourage them to join you next time you go to visit a lawmaker.

LET'S GET GOING!



USW District 3 members from forest industry operations in B.C. presenting the provincial government with a 10-point action plan to assist in saving operations and jobs in May, 2008.

Who Are You Gonna Call?

USW political action campaigns – get involved!

You can help lobby legislators by writing to politicians. It's easy! Visit the **Bargaining, Campaigns and Political Action** section of www.usw.ca and follow the links to find out more about the campaigns our union is involved in. Add your voice by using our online tools to send letters to politicians as part of our latest USW Action.

Federal Politicians

For the latest contact information for MPs, visit the Parliament of Canada website at www.parl.gc.ca.

Don't know what riding you're in? You can find the name of your MP and your riding by entering your postal code on the Parliament of Canada website at www.parl.gc.ca.

Provinces and Territories

To find out more about provincial legislatures, legislative assemblies or to find your local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP), Member of the National Assembly (MNA) or Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), visit one of the following websites for Canadian provinces and territories.

Alberta

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
www.assembly.ab.ca

British Columbia

Legislative Assembly of British Columbia
www.leg.bc.ca

Manitoba

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
www.gov.mb.ca/legislature

New Brunswick

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick
www.gnb.ca/legis

Newfoundland and Labrador

House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador
www.assembly.nl.ca

Northwest Territories

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories
www.assembly.gov.nt.ca

Nova Scotia

Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia
www.gov.ns.ca/legislature

Nunavut

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut
www.assembly.nu.ca

Ontario

Legislative Assembly of Ontario
www.ontla.on.ca

Prince Edward Island

Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island
www.assembly.pe.ca

Quebec

National Assembly of Quebec
www.assnat.qc.ca

Saskatchewan

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan
www.legassembly.sk.ca

Yukon

Yukon Legislative Assembly
www.legassembly.gov.yk.ca



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