

## **Provincial Advocacy Panel**

March 4, 2015; Green Room

Hosted by reThink Green

Panelists: Brennain Lloyd (Northwatch), Cathy Orlando (Citizens Climate Lobby Canada), Richard Eberhardt (Northern Ontario Organizer, NDP Canada).

*Summary notes by Naomi Grant*

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### **Brennain Lloyd**

#### **Five Steps:**

##### **1. Identify the specific decision you want.**

Within the larger context of your goals.

##### **2. Identify who the decision maker is.**

Sometimes more than 1 level of government will be involved; sometimes you need to move a lower level of government to move the higher level of government.

##### **3. Identify your allies and your enemies.**

Re allies: a chorus of voices is much more effective than a single voice: work in community.

Consider who else the decision maker will be hearing from on the issue (both positive and negative).

Mobilize those allies they will listen to. Isolate, neutralize or be ready to respond to contrary messages.

##### **4. Identify your message. The message that will drive the decision you want.**

Test your language (with allies and decision makers).

People need to hear things three ways before it sticks – how can you convey your message in three different ways to find one that they understand and that resonates with them.

##### **5. Identify the moment.**

Often, you want to grab a hook: a decision coming up; a crisis; media attention.

You want the pattern of a trickle and then a flood. The 'trickle' builds cumulative content to reach critical mass (continuous trickle of phone calls, e-mails, etc on the issue). At the right moment, you want a 'flood'.

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When meeting with the decision maker, be clear on what you want in the immediate: put something forward they can do; then something a little farther along your goal; and be clear on your end goal. (E.g. re nuclear waste: immediate – hold a public consultation in a specific community; medium term – have that community pulled out as a possible waste site; long term goal – stop producing nuclear waste.)

#### **'Rules'**

##### **1. There is an exception to every rule.**

##### **2. You need to work in community – build community and alliances**

But don't get lost in them – i.e. don't put all the effort in the alliance and not the work, and don't get lost politically.

##### **3. Believe in the change that you want**

Share your larger vision with others.

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**Cathy Orlando**

All politics is local. Engaging with your local MP is a powerful tool.

*Someone once said - for an MP, there are those who can hurt you at home, and everyone else..*

CCL:

- local groups of volunteers build relationships with their MP's.
- pepper the media on an on-going basis: public education, shifts media positions (remember media outlets choose candidates to back during elections)
- give 3 training sessions per month: elevate the skills of volunteers and hone the talking points. This on-going training is very important.
- is in over 60 ridings in Canada. Great volunteers.

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**Richard Eberhardt**

Advocacy calls are not that common (most calls are for personal concerns). There is a lot of time on an MP's schedule for that. They have the capacity to listen to you. It is up to you.

It comes down to influence, which comes down to power. Influence comes from many directions including personal beliefs, party policy, etc. They will want to make the decision that satisfies them personally and that causes them the least problems.

You want to be the most powerful influence you can to change how s/he votes and influences others.

- get the meeting (you may need to meet with an advisor first)
- do your homework: what have they said before, who do they have to answer to, how will supporting you impact them, what considerations do they face
- think through what you are asking of them and the consequences to them if they do it.

They want their friends to be powerful and their enemies to be weak.

**Be a powerful friend.**

- Have allies.
- Reach out to people around them (e.g. labour & social services for NDP).
- Remember \$ is power in politics

Choose your ask carefully.

- Make sure you ask them something concrete. Ask them to do something they CAN do first (e.g. come out to your event; introduce a petition on your behalf).

Giving them a petition and asking if they will read it into the record in the house is a good way to test their position. If they do, tape it, post it.

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## Questions

### 1. How to be effective at round table discussions when the government is gathering input

Bring props and visuals. Don't be shy but don't be pushy.

- be a facilitator if you have those skills
- have a people at every table

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Have a couple key points you want to get through and take to others

- watch how the meeting is being recorded - what is the product coming out of the meeting. Make sure all the messages are captured (you might volunteer to be the note keeper).

Help connect your network to the other causes you support to get them out.

### 2. What do you do if you meet with the decision maker, and they are not on board.

Don't give up. Be a careful listener. Know where their roadblock is. Be polite. Make your ask right away and see where it goes from there. Use your listening skills to find common ground.

Go in with lots of social capital – keep getting the word out.

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Just because the person in the office says no, does not mean it is the end.

Be stronger – hold a town hall, get a petition, get in letters to the editor, have a strong movement – that is YOUR responsibility.

Then go back from a stronger position, OR find other decision makers, OR replace them.

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Stop them before they say no (it is harder to change a fixed position). Give them an easier fall back position (e.g. you don't ask your kids 'do you want to wear pants, you ask do you want to blue pants or the red pants). Help dismantle their roadblocks.

### 3. What if the party policy is the roadblock.

Depends on the party structure –you can find someone to work within the party, or work on many MP's at once. 3 routes: through the elected representatives; through the party researchers; through party activists (working for change with the party). You need the support of all three to make change within the party.

### 4. What to do about allies or enemies that are causing difficulties.

Difficult allies can be the most difficult. Redirect them to something positive they can do. Keep them engaged but don't give them the space to be the public messenger.

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If one decision maker champions your cause but is someone everyone else distances themselves from, have the political sense to recognize what's going on. Do damage control – be clear they don't speak for you.

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On-going volunteer training is very important. Provide guardrails (e.g. CCL – talking points).

- If it is a politician, approach them from a position of respect for service given. Stay non-partisan. Get in the same room. Build relationships.
- You have to be a standard bearer for what you are working for – do NOT deviate.

### **5. What does the staffer want to hear when you are asking for an appointment**

Who you are, your issue, that it falls within their jurisdiction; “want to meet to let us share our position and how we can work together’

Be sure to talk to the right jurisdiction.

### **6. Effectiveness of letters to the editor**

Yes, letters to the editor do register.

On a scale of impact: FB post 10-15; letters to the editor 30-35; editorial 60; face to face 100.

Even if they do not read it directly, it will show up in their daily media briefing.

### **7. If there is a shared issue, does it make sense to bring more than 1 MP together?**

Having more than 1 together is a big deal – if you get that far, invite the media.

- talk to all individually first
- 1 will take the lead – the one for whom it has the biggest impact.

### **Other points**

- choose your allies carefully- they will impact your organization.

Some politicians will disrupt and distract from your position and do more harm than good. They will isolate others who would have said yes that would have been better allies.

- recognize politicians for the help they give you. They will remember if you are not there for them when the time comes. (N.B. For many groups, remaining non-partisan is crucial).