



Visiting Your MP

You don't have to be an expert or a political activist to visit your MP. The idea may seem daunting to many of us at first. But remember, what we want to do is help MPs understand GRAN's concerns regarding the situation of the African grandmothers and the young people in their care, and to share with them what actions we are asking of our government. Your MP is a busy person and may not know a great deal about GRAN so that is why it is important for you to be ready to explain who we are and what we do.

The goal of your meeting will be to have a conversation with your MP about the importance of one of the three major issues that GRAN advocates for: Access to Medicine, Access to Education, and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

After making your appointment with your MP, take some time to go on line to do some research on their background, the Parliamentary Committees and actions they have participated in, recent speeches, press releases and any other information that might be available to help you make a positive connection with your MP when you meet.

Also, be sure to do some research on the GRAN issue you have chosen to highlight. If the Working Group has produced a "Leave Behind", be sure to take that with you. (You will find it on the appropriate campaign page of the GRAN website.)

Try to establish beforehand, when you speak to the office staff, how much time you will have for the appointment. This will help you prioritize the points you would like to make. It can be useful to e-mail your MP and give him or her a short list of the issues you plan to address.

Don't feel you have to go alone. Your MP will be used to meeting with more than one person. Two, three or even four is just fine. It will help if you get together before you go so that you can review what you want to say. Different people might take different questions.

The Day Arrives

1. Be sure to arrive a bit early.
2. Introduce yourself and thank your MP for taking time to meet with you. Try to comment on some positive action they have taken recently.

3. Introduce GRAN. If the MP is not familiar with GRAN, explain who we are and what our three main areas of focus are. Be sure to take a GRAN brochure.
4. If your MP is a member of the party in power, thank them for some of the recent actions of the government. For example, Canada's pledge to the Global Fund, support to end Child Marriage, or investing in the safety, education and future of women and children affected by the Syrian conflict.
5. Explain why you asked for the meeting. This is where you will focus on the GRAN issues you wish to discuss. Be prepared with a set of questions to ask after you have finished your explanation.
6. Thank your MP for meeting with you and listening to your concerns. Give your MP the appropriate Leave Behind if you have taken one. If your MP has offered to find out more about any of your concerns, establish how he or she is going to contact you or if it would be better if you contacted them.

Comments and Questions You May Get and How to Respond

- “We are hesitant to invest in societies that are corrupt/fragile/unstable.”

Response: “We can appreciate your concern. Maybe in those countries Canada should focus its support on multilateral organizations such as the Global Fund, the Global Partnership for Education, or Girls Not Brides. There are also organizations such as UNICEF, Plan Canada and CARE who have strong connections on the ground. Working with them makes it easier to navigate challenging issues.”

- “Where should we take the necessary funds from?”

Response: “It is not a question of where we should take the money from. For us, it is where the money can best be spent. And that means looking at priorities. The Government of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy promotes Gender Equality and helps empower all women and girls. According to International Development Minister Mme Bibeau, this is the most effective approach to reducing poverty and building a more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous world.”

Another possible response: “The present government is taking steps to end tax evasion through offshore tax havens. Further, the UN is also taking steps in this direction. Also, PM Trudeau promised to ask those Canadians who have very high incomes to pay a little more in taxes.”

- “How much should your particular program receive?”

Response: “Again, it is a question of looking at priorities. Equality for women and girls seems to us to be all-important, and is in line with the Feminist International Assistance policy announced by Minister Bibeau.”

And a Few Hints

- Stay calm. Take your time and think before you respond.
- Experienced MPs may try to steer the conversation in another direction or talk about themselves. Respectfully bring the conversation back. An easy way to do that is to agree with their point and then simply say something like. “But getting back to the importance of”
- Be friendly and respectful but persistent.

Finally, don’t forget to send a note thanking your MP for their time and interest. You can also take the opportunity to summarize the issues and any follow-up actions you discussed.

Helpful website addresses to access information on your MP:

- List of all members of Parliament, their contact info, committee standing etc.
(<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>)
- Find your federal riding by postal code:
(<http://www.elections.ca/scripts/vis/FindED?L=e&PAGEID=20>)