

ELECTION OUTREACH 101 BRIEF

The House of Commons is prorogued until March 24th, 2025. During this time, most Members of Parliament will be in their ridings preparing for an anticipated Spring 2025 election. Currently an election is anticipated to run from April until mid-May. The next few months present a unique opportunity to engage not only with Members of Parliament, but also candidates and audience members. The below is meant to serve as a starting point for engagement options during this period.

REMINDER: With any public facing engagement, please remain as non-partisan as possible. Focus on the importance of civic engagement and support for the arts rather than support for a particular party.

OUTREACH WITH MPS AND CANDIDATES

Outreach

- **Members of Parliament:** [Find your MP by postal code.](#)
 - Reach out to your local MP by email or phone, which may be found on their parliamentary contact page.
- **Candidates:** [This site](#) tracks all the nominated candidates in each riding.
 - Most candidates list their contact information on their website, which you can usually find by Googling the candidate's name and the name of your riding.
 - Many seats are likely to flip this election, particularly from Liberal to Conservative. It is imperative to start building relationships now. [This site](#) indicates who is most likely to win in your riding based on latest polling.
- When reaching out, provide an overview of your organization and highlight that you are a constituent from their riding.

Engagement Options

- **Meeting:** Request a 30-minute introductory meeting, either virtually or in-person. A meeting may be held at their office, at a third-party location like a coffee shop, or, if applicable, at your facility, potentially including a tour.
- **Invitation:** Always feel free to extend an invitation to candidates and MPs to a show or event you are hosting.
- **Sharing information:** You may also send letters of support or petitions from your community partners, audience members, etc., calling on MPs and candidates to publicly recognize the importance of their local theatre.
- **Attend local events and townhalls:** Many candidates and MPs will host events during an election period which you may attend. This is an opportunity to have introductory conversations and ask questions in less formal capacity.

MEETING PROCESS

Hosting and Meetings:

- Prepare for the meeting by reviewing the Meeting Framework. If there are two or more people in the meeting, discuss beforehand who will be saying what.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early for your meeting in order to respect the time of the MP or candidate. If you are hosting at your space, try to meet them at the entrance.
- Address Members of Parliament (MP) as "MP [LAST NAME]" and address a Minister as "Minister" - not Mr. or Ms. Minister.
- Don't presume their positions on topics based on their political affiliation; approach the discussion as an interested member of the community who wants to discuss solutions to issues of importance to Canadians.
- Do not assume the eventual winner of a given riding or as to who may form government while in meeting. Express your eagerness and willingness to work with a government of any stripe.
- Try to find a personal connection to the theatre – a family member's involvement, a favourite show, etc.
- Keep in mind that most politicians will afford only 20-30 minutes for meetings, so be brief and to the point.

Conclusion / Follow-Up:

- Reiterate any commitments of actions identified in the meeting.
- Wrap up the meeting by thanking them and make sure to add that if they have any further questions, to not hesitate to personally contact you or PACT.
- Take a photo together. You don't need to post it publicly if you're not comfortable, but it can be used for internal communications, and please share this with PACT.
- Offer to keep them updated throughout the election, and make a note to check-in.
- Send a thank you email to the MP or candidate and any staff participants in the following days after your meeting. Thank them for their time and reinforce your most important points that you wanted to get across, add in a personal touch, and this gives you the opportunity to include any materials you may have promised to provide them.

Material to bring:

- **PACT collateral:** Our federal advocacy one-pager will help to center the conversation on asks that are being echoed across the theatre sector. You can support this ask by providing lived experience examples of how this ask would benefit your theatre, and the risks that are caused without.
- **Theatre collateral:** Any flyers, annual reports, programs or material that you can leave behind with a candidate/MP after meeting. It will provide a visual and help them remember your individual stories and challenges.
- **Notes:** Ensure you take note of anything you or the candidate and MP have promised to follow up on. If you are unsure about certain questions or action items, please reach out to PACT leadership.

OPTIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Audience Activation

These are optional but effective mechanisms and tools that may be used to help audiences and theatre lovers in your community advocate on your behalf.

- **Audience advocacy:** As appropriate, encourage audience members to communicate the value they find in the performing arts with MPs/candidates (ex: curtain speech, program notes, etc.). This can be when MPs and candidates knock at their door, during community events, or otherwise.
- **Petition:** Ask audience members to sign on to a petition that calls on candidates and MPs to recognize the importance of local theatre in their community.
- **Get out the vote:** As appropriate, remind your audiences to read up on campaign platforms and make a plan to vote.

Social Media

- Stay tuned for PACT's election social media templates. These may be shared on your own social media platforms during the election period.
- We will encourage you to tag your local MPs and candidates and use our arts and election specific hashtags.

NEXT STEPS

- If you have scheduled a meeting with an MP or candidate or saw success with audience engagement, please let us know by emailing Nick Tracey, chair of PACT's Advocacy Committee: NTracey@YoungPeoplestheatre.org.
- For further details on the above or additional support in outreach, please don't hesitate to reach out as well!

ADDENDUM: MEETING FRAMEWORK

Message Framework:

- Give a brief background of your organization, history, and operations, and don't assume they know. Talk about the communities you serve and your impact locally.
- Don't worry about having messaging memorized. It is okay to bring in a few speaking notes, but try to speak from your personal experience. **Remember, you're the expert.** If you don't know the answer to a question simply offer to follow-up with the information afterwards.
- Try to avoid acronyms or professional terminology.
- Feel free to share the challenges you face, while recognizing the MPs are rarely in a position to influence specific programs. Be mindful of jurisdictional oversight – is the issue federal, provincial, or municipal?
- Remember to leave time for the MP to ask you questions – this is the most important part of the meeting.
- Some national messaging is included below that you should feel free to use as appropriate.

The Current State of Canadian Theatre:

- *It is important to share realistic but forward-facing updates on your organization, focusing on positive opportunities and highlighting the community connections and local impact. (Note: Don't focus on struggles during/post pandemic. Focus on the upcoming season, good reviews of performances, success stories).*
- Many theatres are welcoming back new audiences – with many visiting for the first time.
- Audiences trends and tastes have changed, buying last minute, and looking for ambitious productions.
- Government support for the arts has not grown with the sector, leading to significant inflationary devaluation.

Opportunity & Impact:

- Canada enjoys a world-class theatre sector, with amazing professional work being produced every day across this country, by companies large and small, rural and urban.
- Most years, one-in-five Canadians attend a live theatre production.
- With studies reporting a national rise in feelings of loneliness and isolation, Canada's theatres offer an opportunity for connection as places for community members to come together, to share, and be inspired.
- Theatres are aware of price sensitivity with the rising cost of living, with nearly all theatres having a robust portfolio of accessibility programs and community outreach.
- Canada's theatres employ 30,000 people.
- Show Business can be Big Business. Cultural tourists stay longer and spend nearly *three-times more* while they're here, supporting other local businesses. Ask any local business, when the theatre has a show, the restaurants and hotels are full.
- For every \$1 invested by the Federal Government into the Arts, we generate \$15 in economic impact.



Questions for them:

- What is the last show or event they enjoyed going to?
- What is their party's platform commitments as it pertains to supporting Arts & Culture in your riding?

Federal Asks: *(don't feel the need to get into too many details, this can be the topic of a follow-up meeting with PACT).* PACT has aligning its federal asks with national industry-wide advocacy.

- That 1% of government spending go towards Arts and Culture programs, including an additional \$140 million in permanent funding to the Canada Council for the Arts. This increase will support stabilization, transformation, and growth for core operations.
- A sector coalition is asking for a Live Performing Arts Tax Credit, which would mirror the successful Film and Television Tax Credit by reinvesting a labour rebate into local jobs and scalable industry growth.