



Have Your Voice Heard!

Put your pen to paper and write away. Writing a letter to a City Councilor, Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) or Member of Parliament (MP) is a great way to communicate your concerns about hunger and poverty to politicians. If each person in your class writes a letter, it is a cost-efficient way to present multiple voices and ideas around one issue. Here are 8 tips to help you get started.

1. **Be clear**

You are going to need to have a clear idea of what concerns you want to address in your letter. You may want to draw these concerns from personal experience. Researching the issues is a great place to start. Check out Daily Bread Food Bank's *Who's Hungry? 2008 Youth Guide to Hunger in the GTA*.

2. **Contact Information**

Gather the contact information of the councilor, MPP, MP in your area. You may also want to gather the contact information of the councilor or minister responsible for the issue you are addressing. Visit municipal, provincial and federal government websites for contact information.

3. **Make it personal**

Personalize your letter. Government staff who receive letters are trained to screen for, and exclude, form letters and e-mail templates. Letters that appear spontaneous and individual, such as handwritten letters receive far more attention.

The best way to do this is:

- Introduce yourself
- Describe what is unique about your experiences
- Explain why the issue affects you personally. For example, when you explain why you are concerned about hunger and food bank use, you can refer to an article you read, a news story you saw or a website you visited.

4. **Be polite**

Be specific about what you want this person to do about poverty and be sure to be courteous.

5. **Ask for a response**

It's important to outline that you want to hear back from your councilor, MMP or MP.

6. **Keep it short**

Try to make sure your letter is one page or less.

7. **Send it out**

You can mail, e-mail or fax your letter. A letter going to the federal government does not need postage.

8. **Follow up**

Politicians at all levels of government are accountable to all of their constituents, so follow up with a phone call to make sure they got your letter.