



Citizens' Climate Lobby
Lobby Climatique des Citoyens

MEETING WITH YOUR LOCAL EDITOR – Canadian Version

Why do we want to meet with newspaper editorial boards?

We generate political will through the publication of letters to the editor and op-eds. As powerful as these are – and they do carry a great deal of weight – an editorial endorsement for our policy carries the greatest influence, because it represents the official view of the newspaper.

When candidates run for office, they often get interviewed by editorial boards in the hope of getting an endorsement. So, when a newspaper endorses a particular policy or legislation, elected officials take notice, because it could be a factor in securing the newspaper's endorsement in the next election. Newspapers editorials, of course, also educate and influence their readers. So, an endorsement from the newspaper can influence and motivate constituents to support our policy and communicate their support to members of Parliament.

From time to time, CCL will send out what we call media packets for our volunteers to pitch to editorial writers with the aim of getting the newspaper to write an editorial talking about our solution. By meeting with the editorial board, you dramatically increase the chances that A) the editorial writer will actually look at the media packet and B) write something that reflects our perspective. By meeting with the board you establish a relationship with a contact on the board who is then more likely to return phone calls respond to email.

What are the objectives in meeting with editorial boards?

As mentioned, the primary goal, the brass ring you're reaching for is an editorial endorsement for CCL's proposal of Carbon Fee and Dividend. If you get an immediate commitment for an editorial, great, but there are other objectives for the meeting: Establish relationship with a contact on the editorial board.

- Consider writing an editorial when legislation is introduced.
- Commitment to publish op-eds periodically from your CCL chapter.
- Endorse carbon-pricing friendly candidates during elections
- Become a resource for the editorial board whenever they weigh in on the climate change issue.
- If your group conducts events, they publish the announcements and/or sends reporters to it. Better yet they partner with you and do things such as broadcast your event either livestream or on their website.

Getting the meeting

Step one to getting a meeting is to find the name and contact information for the editorial page editor. Good place to start is the "contact us" page, which might have a staff directory. If you can't find the info online, call

the newspaper's main number and ask for the editorial department. Chances are, a receptionist will answer the phone and you can ask for the name and contact of the editorial page editor.

In the same way that you read the newspaper for letter-to-the-editor opportunities, start reading the paper with an eye toward editorial board meeting opportunities. Oftentimes, they are one and the same. An editor is more likely to reply if you reference something that has been in the newspaper, particularly if it's an editorial. CCL USA has gotten meetings with editorial contacts at USA Today and the Washington Post because they wrote to the editorial page editor about something that was on their opinion page. CCL Toronto with the help of many CCLers across Canada has been relentlessly sending letters to the editor and editorial packets to the Globe and Mail and Toronto Star and ultimately secured meetings with both papers. If you live in a smaller town, members of your group may know the local editors.

So, read the newspaper, especially the opinion page, and look for those opportunities. Maybe they wrote an editorial about Canada's carbon pricing policy. Maybe they wrote something about cheap gas. Perhaps they wrote about the impact of climate change after a weather-related disaster. These all provide entry points to make contact and request a meeting. Here's the thought process of the editor: "Someone responded to something we wrote, so we should respond to them."

It's that simple.

Once you've identified that opportunity for engagement, write to the editor and open by introducing yourself as a volunteer with the local chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby and thanking/acknowledging the piece that was in the paper and why you thought it was important. Transition into the need for a national policy that credibly addresses the global warming, and that citizens in your city are advocating for a multi-partisan solution that is simple, effective and politically viable. Tell them that representatives from your group would like to meet with the editorial board to brief them on this solution and also the economic study showing that it will actually add millions of jobs to the economy. Tell them that as the fourth branch of government, the one that holds the other three branches accountable, newspapers have an important role to play in motivating Parliament to take action on climate change, and we'd like to talk about how to move solutions forward.

Plan your meeting

Once you have a meeting set, schedule a time to get together with your team to talk about your agenda, strategy and roles to assign for participants. If you haven't already, research the newspaper's editorial position on climate change, policy and related issues. At the end of this document, we have a suggested agenda for the meeting. At your planning meeting, decide on different roles – facilitator, note-taker, briefers. Also, assign topics that each member will be responsible for covering if questions arise, such as science, impact, economics, border adjustments, etc. The idea here isn't that you will present on all these topics, but that someone in the group is prepared to answer questions that might come up.

You may wish to include a community leader in your delegation – business owner, church pastor, for instance. Also consider bringing experts on climate change and economics if you can. The only caveat to this is that you need to make sure they're on the same page with our proposal. We don't want to send mixed signals.

Review the most recent laser talks before your meeting: [October 2017 Booklet](#) or [Laser Talk webpage](#)

Agenda and meeting strategy

Rather than a presentation, your meeting should be a conversation, but one in which you've provided the context, one that is steered in a certain direction. There's a great temptation to tell them the things we WANT them to know, but really have to tell them the things they NEED to know. We won't know what they need to know unless we have a conversation, a back-and-forth in which we listen. A good meeting, therefore, will be one in which you do half the talking and the editorial board does the other half.

After quick self-intros, a little about CCL and acknowledgement for some of the things the newspaper has written, start the conversation rolling

- “We think the discussion on climate change has moved beyond the question of whether or not it is happening. The big question is: ‘What should we do about it?’”
- “If you're in agreement on that, then we'll start the conversation there.”*

If agreed, then suggested topic are...

- Give context by introducing [The Five Ways to Price carbon](#) – a great visual for orienting people unfamiliar with carbon pricing to the various solutions
- Take a few minutes to lay out CCL's Carbon Fee and Dividend proposal, stressing that this is a market-based solution supported by conservatives.
- [Carbon Fee and Dividend](#) cartoon also available in [French](#)
- [Cap and Trade](#) cartoon also available in [French](#)
- Take a few minutes to highlight the conclusions of Canada's Ecofiscal Commission's April 2018 report, [Clearing the air: How carbon pricing helps Canada fight climate change](#).
- If there is time take a few more minutes for a quick briefing on the REMI study, emphasizing that the study negates any concerns that pricing carbon will impede the economy ([Laser Talks](#))
- Outline the main conclusions the BC carbon tax study (Laser Talks)
- If you think it is appropriate and you have time – consider outlining how CF&D will reduce income inequality ([Laser Talks](#)).
- Provide context of what is currently happening around the issue – use the most recent [media packets released from CCL Canada](#).

Get the conversation rolling

“We think there are enough Parliamentarians who would support this solution for it to pass, but we need to create the space that allows them to stand up, to give them the courage to back up their convictions. We think the newspaper can help them be the problem-solvers they want to be by publishing editorials endorsing carbon fee and dividend. That's what we've come here today to ask.”

“We'd like to stop now, and hear from you. What are your thoughts, questions and concerns about fee and dividend, the Ecofiscal Commission and the REMI study? We can answer questions about climate science, local impact or other things you'd like to ask about climate change, but let's have a conversation now about how we can move forward on solving this problem.”

“Citizens’ Climate Lobby is a non-partisan organization. We recognize that *all politics is local* (Tip O’Neil). At this time of massive change we need our local newspapers more than ever, because the change Canada needs is going to happen one riding at a time. [Polling data](#) shows us Canadian want change. Our local media across Canada, will play a key role in keeping the conversations about carbon pricing meaningful. Citizens’ Climate Lobby is here to help.”

As the conversation and the meeting wind down, be sure to: Ask again if the newspaper would write an editorial endorsing Carbon Fee and Dividend. If not at this time, would they consider writing about it when a bill is introduced?

- Find out which member of the editorial board should be the contact communicating with your group.
- Let the board know that your chapter has a wealth of information on the climate issue and to please reach out to us as a resource.
- Ask if the newspaper would be willing to publish op-eds from your group periodically.
- Take a picture – ask if you can Tweet and Facebook that you just met with the editorial board
- Thank them for their time.

More about the meeting:

Since your meeting will be a conversation, there is always the possibility that the conversation can take an unexpected turn and get off track. The facilitator’s job is to allow for a free-flowing exchange of ideas, but one that is directed toward a certain outcome. If the conversation starts going down a rabbit hole, it’s the facilitator’s job to pull it out of the rabbit hole and get things back on track: “This is a really interesting discussion, and I wish we had more time for it, but there’s other ground we need to cover.”

“Fourth branch of government pep talk.”

“Before we go, I want to acknowledge the critical role that you, the press, have to play in solving this problem. You are, as I’m sure you’re well aware, the fourth branch of government in our democracy. You’re the branch that lights a fire under the other branches when they fail to do their jobs. The 1835 Libel Trial of Joseph Howe established the fundamental basis for freedom of the press in Canada. Right now, Parliament is failing to take action on climate change, and it’s a failure that jeopardizes not only our nation, but the entire world. You can’t sit back and watch it all fall apart like some bemused third party. This is a fight that you need to be in. This is a time when it’s absolutely essential to fulfill your role as that fourth branch of government by holding the other branches accountable. We have a solution that is simple, effective and easy for all sides to embrace. And we hope that you’ll do everything in your power to inspire, prod, shame and motivate Parliament to make it a reality.”

FYI: The four branches of government are:

- 1) **The executive branch:** the PMO, cabinet + privy council
- 2) **The legislative branch:** the House of Commons and Senate
- 3) **The legal branch:** the Supreme Court
- 4) **The fire lighting branch:** the Media

After the meeting

Immediately after the meeting, take a little time to sit down together and debrief. What worked? What didn't? What are the next steps in developing the relationship with the newspaper and who will take those steps? If the newspaper invited you to submit an op-ed, agree on the topic and who will draft it. Decide who will be the point person who develops the relationship with the editorial board contact.

Later in the day or the next morning, send a thank you note to the editorial page editor and send any resource materials that may have been requested in the meeting.

The media point person in your group should cultivate the relationship with the editorial board contact with periodic communications, but no more than twice a month. Keep these communications short and convey useful information. Acknowledge editorials or commentary on the opinion page that relates to the issue and perhaps provide a link to a resource that adds further perspective to the piece. The idea here is to communicate just enough so that they remember who you are but not so much that they trash your emails before opening them. Establishing and cultivating this relationship will improve the odds that the media packets you pitch will be given due consideration.

Suggested Social Media Strategy

Many Newspapers and editors have Facebook and Twitter profiles. If you have the resources, assign someone or a group of people to follow the paper and the editor and leave comments, cheering them on and befriending them at the same time.

Meeting Agenda for Editorial Board

1. Short self-introductions of everyone. Facilitator gives brief description of CCL and purpose
2. Acknowledge newspaper for article, or commentary on climate or environment.
3. **Opening statement:** Scientists have warned that a warmer world would increase the severity of extreme weather. From what we've seen of weather disasters these past couple years, those predictions are turning out to be accurate. These disasters should be generating a sense of urgency for Parliament to deal with climate change, but that's not happening. With a national climate and energy plan expected in 2016, the media can play an important role and help elevate the discussion on carbon pricing. We have everything we need to transition to a low carbon economy except political will. And that's why we want to talk to you today.
4. **Question:** We have some thoughts we'd like to share with you about carbon pricing but before we do that we'd like to hear what the newspaper's position is on the science of climate change and what, if anything, we should do to address the problem.

Listen carefully to the responses you get from the editorial board. Based on what you hear, your team can tailor their remarks on the follow topics:

- **The science of climate change:** Thankfully in Canada, unlike in the USA, most of media accepts the debate is over. But don't assume.
- **Creating jobs:** The transition to clean energy will produce a net increase in jobs in the USA, according to CCL's REMI report. Canada's Ecofiscal Commission determined that a meeting our climate commitments using a well-designed carbon pricing policy would grow the economy by 3.7% by compared to regulation.
- **Income Inequality:** with carbon fee and dividend, because everyone gets the same sized cheque, regardless of their carbon footprint and their income, it is a fairer tax system that will reduce of income inequality
- **Security:** What are the national security implications for living in a world where global warming has run amok?
- **Pricing carbon:** Present CCL's fee-and-dividend proposal as a legislative solution that both the left and the right can get behind.
- **Political will:** carbon fee and dividend has the virtues simplicity and predictability and is probably the least vulnerable to industry shenanigans. It would put money directly into citizens' pockets. All these features would create political will for Canada to head down the track of a low carbon economy.

5. Ask if there are any questions.

6. Ask if the newspaper would consider taking an editorial stand in favor of this proposal and leave an editorial packet with them.

7. Ask who is the best person to be in touch with whenever we have information to share with the editorial board. Thank them for their time!