

# How to Write a Letter to an Elected Official

Letters are a great way to express your opinion on a specific issue to an elected official. Elected officials care about what their constituents think, but most people do not take the time to write about and share their perspectives with them directly.

This resource provides tips to help individuals write letters to elected officials about issues that matter to them. If you have questions that aren't answered here or would like more support, reach out to the UCalgary Government Relations team: [ucalgary.ca/government-relations#contact-us](https://ucalgary.ca/government-relations#contact-us)

## WHY WRITE AN ADVOCACY LETTER?

People write letters to elected officials for a variety of reasons:

- To encourage a specific action or outcome (e.g. encouraging increased public investment in post-secondary institutions)
- To discourage a specific action or outcome (e.g. discouraging cuts to post-secondary institution budgets)
- To increase awareness and understanding of a particular issue or concern (e.g. the value of post-secondary education and research in Alberta)
- To make sure elected officials know that an issue is important to their constituents.

## WHO SHOULD I WRITE TO?

- Write to elected officials at the level of government that makes decisions about the issue you want to talk about. For example, the provincial government makes decisions about the Campus Alberta grant that supports university operations.
- Write to your elected representative for the constituency that you live in. For example, if you live in Brentwood, you'd contact the MLA for Calgary-Varsity about provincial issues and the MP for Calgary Confederation about federal issues.
- If applicable, you can also write to the Minister responsible for a particular issue. For example, the Minister of Advanced Education makes decisions about post-secondary education in Alberta, and the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry makes many decisions impacting universities at the federal level.
- If you are writing to more than one elected official about an issue, write separate, personalized letters for each.

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## TIPS FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE LETTER

- Be brief. Keep your letter to approximately one page in length.
- Mention that you are writing to them as a constituent.
- Clearly identify the specific issue that you want to address and cover only one issue per letter.
- Keep a respectful tone. The purpose of a letter is to share your perspective with the elected official. It is reasonable to express concerns and explain how the issue may impact you and our communities. Make sure you focus on the positive outcomes you want to see, rather than criticizing the government for things they may have or haven't done.
- Share personal stories and anecdotes about why the issue you are writing about matters to you. For example:
  - How you've used the skills and experiences you gained through post-secondary education.
  - Ways that post-secondary education issues affect you and your family, especially if you have children or other family attending or planning to attend (e.g. high-quality education, student experiences, attracting and retaining faculty, tuition and fees, etc.).
  - How post-secondary education and research affects your organization or the industry you work in (e.g. attracting talent, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation).
- Thank the elected official for their time and consideration and politely add that you look forward to hearing their response. Provide a way for the elected official to respond by providing your contact information (e.g. email and phone number).



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