

## U1L3A4 | Writing a Political Letter

### overview

Students will create a model of progress for Canada and share this model with a government official in the form of a letter.

### learning goal

- To share a personal opinion with a political official.

### success criteria

- Students will be able to create a model of progress for Canada and share this model with a government official in the form of a letter.

### Inquiry Question

- Which policy (neoliberalism or progressive economics) is more likely to promote the factors of well-being that you value most in society?

### your task

Given what you have learned about measuring progress answer the following question in a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada:

*Economic progress is one way to measure the progress of a country. Some people think there are other factors. How should Canada be measuring the progress of our nation? What other factors should be considered?*

In your letter you may support the ideology of the current government or you may oppose it. You should also explain a minimum of three criteria you feel are the best indicators of progress.

Use the handout enclosed on “How to write a political letter” to help you structure your letter and ideas.

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### 1. Keep it **BRIEF**

- Start with your strongest point. No need for rambling introductions to the issue.
- Shorter letters are more impactful and easier to remember.
- Limit yourself to one topic because adding topics dilutes the effectiveness of your pitch.
- Keep a positive, friendly tone. Confrontational attitudes will only hurt your cause.

### 2. Use **FORMATTING** to emphasize important points.

- You want your letter to be easily scannable for the main points and takeaways.
- Bullets are fine but don't use too many in a letter. (You can use lots on "How to" lists.)
- **Bold** and underlining are good to use. So is **colour** if you can afford it.
- Avoid italics as they are harder to read.
- Use ALL CAPS sparingly as it can be interpreted as shouting (in written form).

### 3. **BE SPECIFIC** in your supporting details.

- Use statistics, facts, quotes, names, etc., to back up your claims.
- Look into the history of the issue and see what has been done before. Was it successful? Use this information to support your idea of how to solve the problem or why some other proposal will not work.

### 4. Use **EPIC** to help you organize your letter:

- **Engage:** Engage the politician with a strong fact, arresting image, or startling statement of your issue. You are trying to grab the politician's attention
- **Propose:** Make a specific proposal regarding a piece of legislation or action they can take to improve the status quo regarding your issue. You want it to be absolutely clear what you are advocating.
- **Illustrate:** Illustrate how the proposal would work and why it's important. Give a few details or examples to make it concrete. This fleshes out your solution and gives reasons why it's a good idea.
- **Call to action:** Call on the politician to take a specific action. This ends your letter with a request which they will remember.

(Adopted from Bread for the World, [tinyurl.com/22lhh7](http://tinyurl.com/22lhh7))

### 5. **FINISH** strong

- **Ask for action.** Be specific and pointed about what it is you want them to do. This is why you are talking to them in the first place.
- Thank them for their time and for listening to you.
- Give them your contact info for future reference.

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### 6. DRAFT, EDIT, REWRITE

- Improper grammar, incorrect spelling, and poor style can hurt your chances of making an effective argument.
- Always ask one or two people you trust to review your letter for these points.
- Come back an hour later and reread it yourself. Then rewrite it.
- Never submit a first draft. Ever. No exceptions. No kidding.

### 7. FOLLOW UP with a short, personalized thank you note.

- This is especially important if they respond to you in writing.
- Include your ask in the thank you note.
- This keeps your issue and your ask fresh in their mind.
- It shows them you are a respectful organization worthy of respect in turn

### Notes:

- **Don't bother writing to a politician for whom you are not a constituent.** Their staff will likely throw the letter away without reading it as soon as they realize you cannot vote for their boss.
- **Your may receive a form letter in response.** This is normal. Don't be offended by it. IF you want a personalized response, try to get a meeting with the politician.
- **Threats are absolutely out of order.** Not only will they alienate the politician you are trying to convince to support your issue, they may also earn you a visit from law enforcement in the post-9/11 world we live in.
- **BE NICE!** I said this before, but it is worth repeating. You are trying to convince someone who doesn't support you to change sides and risk their reputation and position to further your personal agenda. Confrontation may look good on the six o'clock news, but it will not bring you any closer to achieving your goal. (Unless your goal is to get kicked out and then blame "the system" for why your issue failed to pass.)

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Criteria	Level 4 Exemplary	Level 3 Accomplished	Level 2 Developing	Level 1 Beginning
<b>Format and Organization</b>	<p>Written with appropriate political letter guidelines.</p> <p>Includes an introduction, body and conclusion.</p> <p>Follows the guidelines for writing the letter well.</p>	<p>Appropriate political letter format.</p> <p>Follows the guidelines for writing the letter.</p>	<p>May not be an appropriate letter.</p> <p>Not all guidelines and conventions followed.</p>	<p>Does not produce an acceptable letter.</p>
<b>Knowledge and Support of Ideas</b>	<p>Uses specific, and strong, evidence from student research to support position.</p> <p>Uses this evidence to influence appropriate representative and current legislation.</p> <p>Develops a strong persuasive argument.</p> <p>May receive a response.</p>	<p>Uses some evidence from student research to support position.</p> <p>Uses this evidence to influence appropriate representative and/or current legislation.</p> <p>May develop a persuasive argument or agree with a previous position from the representative.</p>	<p>Uses limited evidence from student research to support position.</p> <p>Attempts to influence an appropriate representative, but support appears limited.</p>	<p>Does not include much, if any, evidence of research.</p> <p>Does not attempt to influence a representative.</p>
<b>Writing Style</b>	<p>Solid work that demonstrates careful attention to details.</p> <p>Few, if any, errors.</p>	<p>Solid work that demonstrates attention to details.</p> <p>The letter may have a few minor errors.</p>	<p>Does not demonstrate attention to details.</p> <p>Many errors.</p>	<p>Does not demonstrate attention to details.</p> <p>Many errors. Very brief.</p>

**Comments:**