

# Shaping Government Policy: Speak so you are heard...



# Introductions & Background

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# Outline of Today

- Who's your audience and what environment are you facing?
- Defining and Refining your Strategy and your ask
- Executing your plan
- Regional differences – Rural/Urban, Gov't MLA/Opposition
- A few examples
- Plenty of time for questions

# Reaching your audience – your MLA and beyond

Shaping government policy can have a variety of audiences.

To build and execute a government relations strategy you need to appreciate:

- Who shapes public policy?
- Who is going to make the decision?
- Influencers versus decision makers
- Are there multiple ways to reach the same person?

Helps you determine who you *should* talk to and who you *could* talk to.

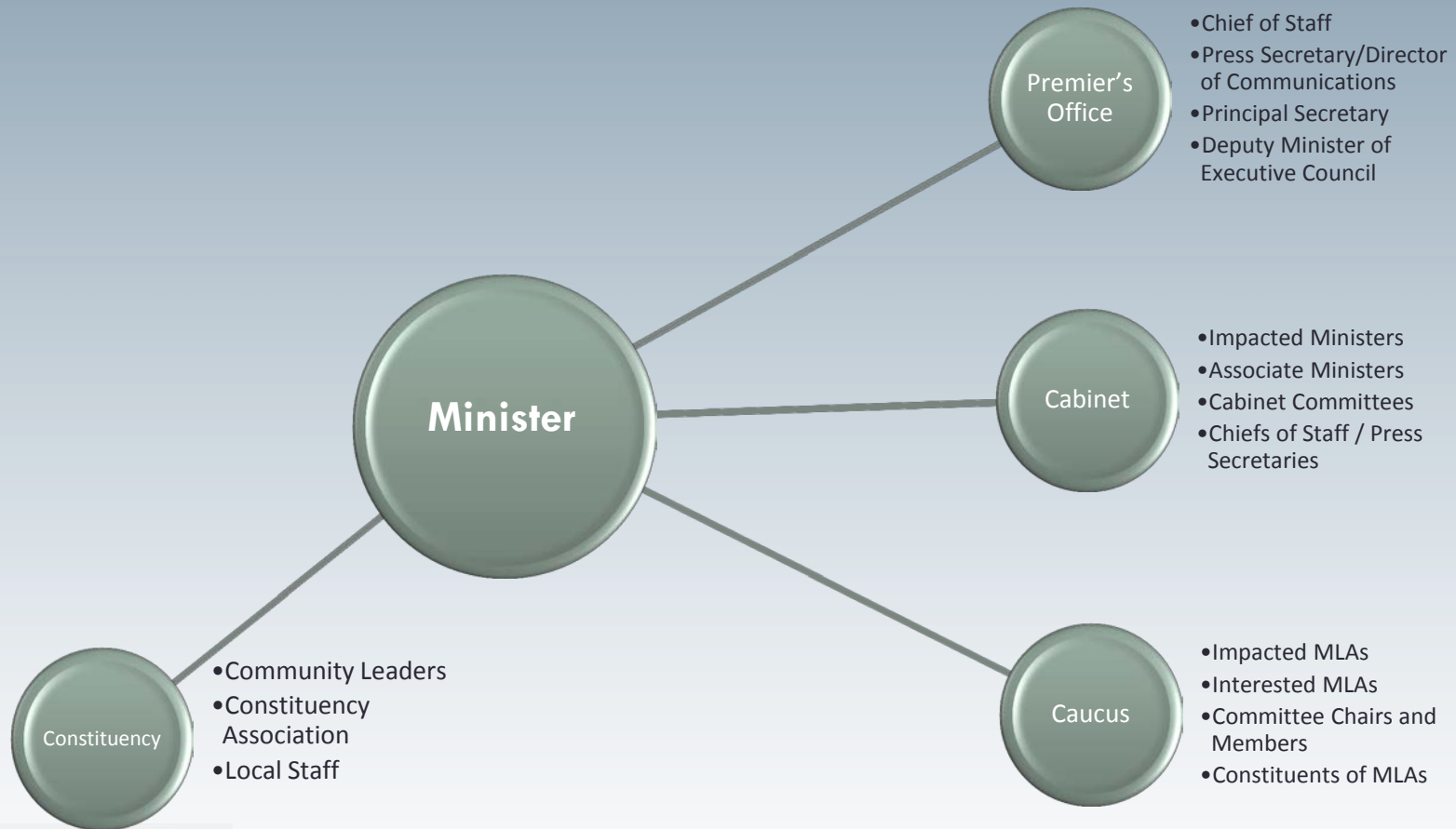


The logo for Impact features the word "IMPACT" in a bold, white, all-caps sans-serif font, centered within a dark blue rectangular background.

# Minister's Office

- Don't forget the dimensions of a Minister's Office
- Minister
- Chief of Staff
- Press Secretary
- Special Advisor

# Ministerial Political Sphere



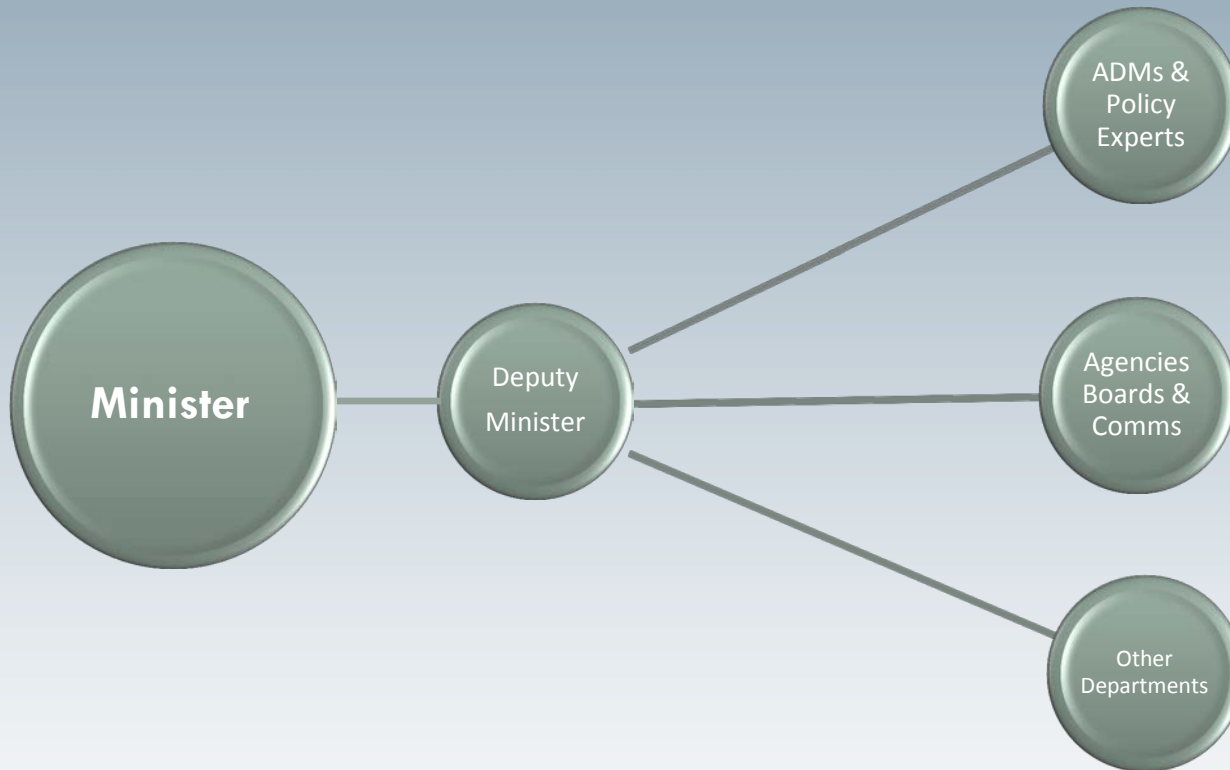
# Another (humorous) way to look at Ministerial Influence



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# Ministerial Bureaucratic Sphere





# Who else?

- Government is in the good news business. Influenced by:
  - Mainstream Media
  - Local Media
  - Community Leaders
  - Other levels of government
  - Volume at the constituency office
  - Passionate advocates
- Social media is a powerful tool to influence public policy if used correctly and carefully.

# Who will make the decision?

- Minister often makes the decision
- But, in reality, is a recommendation often made for his concurrence?
- Who will make that recommendation?
- Who will influence what the Minister sees?
- Will you like what it says?

# Influencers versus Decision Makers

- Influencers are often as important as those who make the decision
- Why?
  - To get the recommendation that you want.
  - To educate the Minister and influence the Minister's opinion

# Your local MLA

- In the absence of constant communication with a Minister, your most powerful advocate is your local MLA, if that MLA is a member of the government caucus.
- But as we can see there are so many other avenues of communication.



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# Building your strategy – Environmental Scan

- You can't get where you are going if you don't know where you are.
- Ask yourself...
  - Where exactly does your issue lie?
  - What are the perceptions and myths?
  - How much do decision makers and influencers know? Do you need to educate anyone?
  - What else is on their radar?
  - If you were their advisor, what would you tell them is the other side of your story?

# Now on to Your Strategy



# Why do you need a Government Relations Strategy?

- Over-arching goal is to be positioned for access and influence when needed
  - For reputation management
  - For issues management
  - To influence public policy and direction
  - To access funding – operations and infrastructure



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# Key Elements of Successful Government Relations

- Increase your knowledge of and ability to influence policy issues
  - Understand the political process and how and when decisions are made
  - General direction, policy development, legislation and regulation, Task Forces and working groups, pending decisions
  - Find win/wins
- Build and strengthen relationships with the Provincial Government to increase opportunities for advocacy and partnership
  - Identify key provincial and municipal stakeholders and their influencers
  - Be heard
  - Position as partners, subject matter experts
- Improve your focus on a strategic and achievable number of issues.
  - Clear and Consistent Messaging



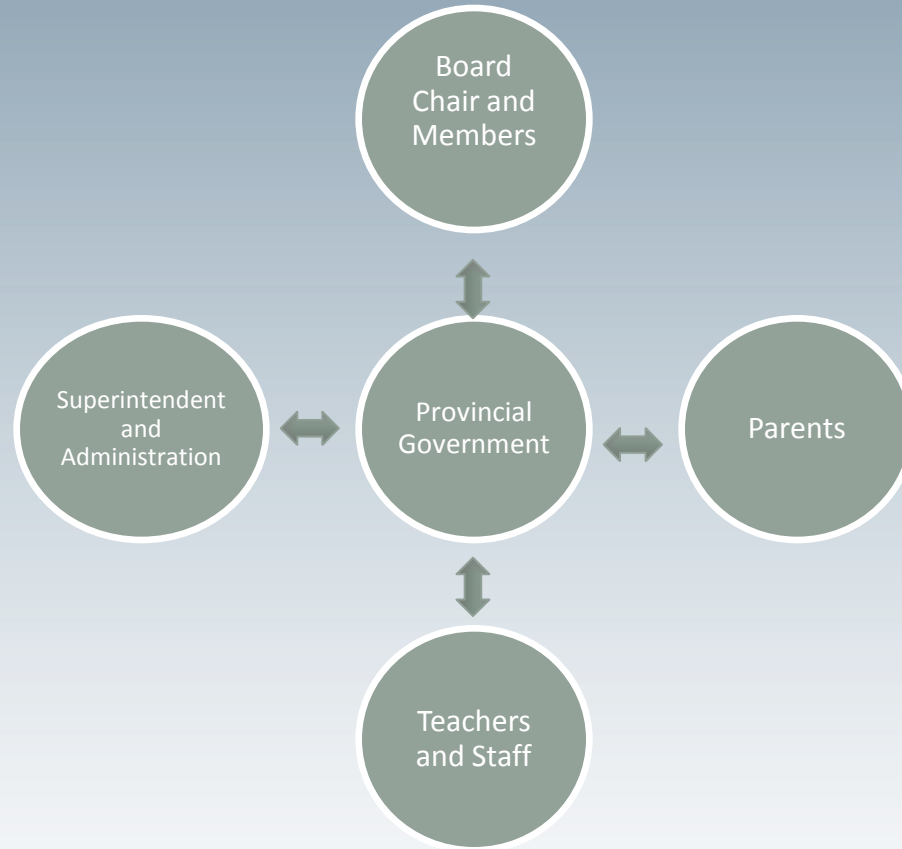
# Everyone has a Role

- Everyone in your organization has a role as an advocate – administration, students, parents, teachers community, friends and family
- Effective government relations is about getting the right message to the right people at the right time – understanding the hierarchy and decision-making process

# Coordination is key to success

- Role of the Board and Administration
  - Multi-pronged approach
  - Central repository of intelligence
  - Key messages
  - Focused priorities
  - Informed Strategic plan

# Key to Success is COORDINATION:



# Tools for Advocacy

- Focused and achievable priorities – Key Messages
- Clear asks of government
- Opportunities for advocacy (calendar of events)
- Central repository to ensure momentum continues forward and success is measured



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# What does success look like?

- The right people in government know who to contact within your Board
- Your Board is viewed as a partner, you are known as subject matter experts, community leaders and influencers
- The right people in government and the community know your Board's priority issues
- Your Board speaks with one voice – common messages and priorities



# The Ask

- Are you ready to make an ask?
  - Are you clear on what you need?
  - Once you know your ask, who can make the decision? Who can influence it?
  - Have you prepared the groundwork?



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# Strategy of the Ask

- Is the right person making the ask?
- Are you asking the right person?
- Is the timing right?



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# Execution





# The Policy Environment

Public policy development is a **complicated and sometimes emotion-driven process of establishing goals, decisions, and actions** in an environment of people **with different and competing interests**.

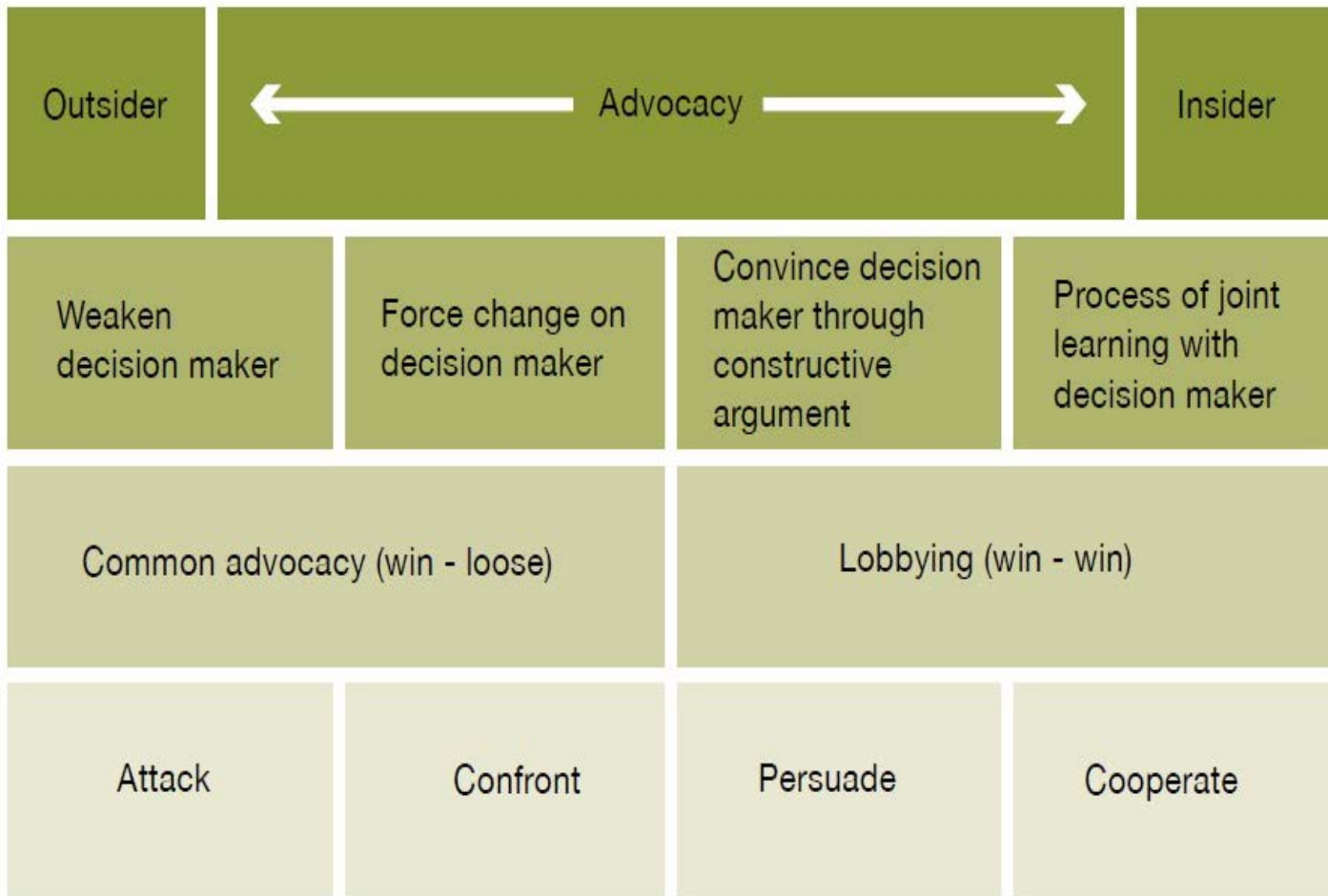
# The Power of Persuasion

- Effective lobbying is persuading people who have a say in the decision making to agree with a request.
- *“It is in my best interest to convince others it is in their best interest to put my interests first.”*

~ *Anonymous*

- Understanding how to influence the decisions of government is critical to achieving your goals.

# Position towards decision maker



# Finding a win-win

- Avoid attacks and confrontation
- Move to persuasion and cooperation
- Draw them into ownership position
- Governments are looking for **knowledgeable and reliable partners** who are close to real problems and willing to work on **solutions**

# How do you ensure you are heard?

- Need to show:
  - How your ask aligns with government's agenda/goals
  - What the numbers are, what the benefits are
  - Why it makes sense for gov't. Good policy? Good politics?
  - Will it get good press or win votes?
  - Or, at a minimum, why it won't cause a problem

# Understand the Context

- What does the broad political environment look like?
- What are the gov't's priorities? (mandate letters)
- What's happening politically? (fiscal pressure, under attack, leadership review, election cycle)
- Where does your issue stand relative to the gov't's agenda?

# Understand the Context

- Who are the champions? Detractors?
- Who else is impacted by this? How?
- Where are other “competitors”? What are they doing?
- What has the gov’t said on the record on this issue?

# When you are talking to government about policy

- Ministers matter, but so do public servants
- Ministers usually decide, but public servants recommend
- Public servants usually survive elections - Ministers may not
- You need to work with both



# When you are talking to government about policy

- Government MLAs matter, but so do opposition MLAs
- Governments don't have all the answers
- An educated opposition can help a decision move forward with fewer delays
- It is not desirable to endeavour to embarrass the government.

# When you are talking to government about policy

- The media can play an important role
- Sometimes the media will determine which issues merit attention just by the coverage.
- Conversely, for some issues, the more media attention, the more complicated government's role becomes in managing the issue.

# Messaging and Materials

- Is the issue clear?
- Is the action request clear?
- Does it follow the KISS method – Keep It Simple, Stupid
- Is there a link to get more information?
- Does the ask makes sense?
- Is it political or partisan?
- Am I targeting people who care about this issue?

# Be prepared

- To spend time
  - Won't be quick
  - Long term strategy may be necessary
  - Make sure public servants are briefed before you see Ministers
- To adjust your strategy, take advantage of events
- To compromise
- To listen and pay attention to politics

# Be prepared

- Answer may be no, or may be “if you changed that, could be yes”
- May be: “come back after the election”

# What is a good meeting?

- Well Briefed (forewarned & forearmed)
- Well Timed (know the status of the budget, election, policy cycle)
- Well Aimed (target the right person)
- Well Developed (lay the appropriate ground work for your ask)

# What is a good meeting?

- Well Behaved (don't get emotional – stay factual)
- Well Received (Be careful with your use of the media)
- Well Written – Make your request easy to use.
- Well Prepared – Always be on the lookout for an opportunity to advance your case.

# Potential Tactics

- One on one meetings
- Committee meetings
- Formal dinners or informal luncheons and breakfasts
- Informal round table discussions
- Open houses
- Letters
- E-Mail
- Press Releases/Media interviews



# Do's

- Provide accurate information
- Go to government with solutions as well as problems
- Do not be afraid to negotiate for what you need
- Be solution oriented
- Maintain frequency of contact
- Build relationships and trust over time
- At political AND bureaucratic levels

# Don'ts

- Don't promise them anything in return for a vote.
- Don't threaten, pressure, beg or negatively confront them.
- Don't be argumentative with an elected official, but calmly and rationally explain your opinion and why you believe what you believe.

# Don'ts

- Don't expect them to know everything about every issue. Sometimes it is important to be a source for lawmakers and help educate them on an issue.
- Don't demand immediate meetings, but be flexible with their schedules.
- Don't be offended if they cannot meet with you, and ask you to meet with staff instead

# An Example (if time)



# Questions?

