

#KeepCurling

National Grassroot Campaign

Background

Curling Canada, in partnership with the Northern Ontario Curling Association, has launched a national grassroots campaign to help raise the public profile of Canada's curling clubs with a particular focus on elected officials at all levels of government. Our intention through this campaign is to build capacity at the local level to enable the curling community to promote the important role curling clubs play in their community - economically and socially.

As Canada shifts from emergency pandemic response to the social and economic recovery phase, curling clubs can provide

vital support to their community by promoting the safe return to play, serving as a community hub and supporting safe economic and social activity. By encouraging members to stay home during the early days of the pandemic, curling clubs did their part keeping Canadians safe.

Now, it's time for us to help Canadians get back out there and **#keepcurling**. This campaign can help us promote our great sport, showcase our role in the community, and reinforce the importance of sustaining curling clubs as part of Canada's social fabric.

Campaign Objectives

Raise the profile of curling clubs across the country, showcasing their integral economic and community impacts.

Measurable Targets:

- Number of visits by elected officials to local clubs
- Marked increase in local clubs' social media following and reach
- Marked increase in the Northern Ontario Curling Association and Curling Canada's social media following and reach
- Marked increase in investments in community sport

Build lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with federal, provincial, and local decision makers.

Measurable Targets:

- Number of meetings with federal, provincial, and local decision makers
- Marked increase in event attendance
- Ratio of emails/letters sent to decision makers vs. responses received
- Funding received

Broadcast the reopening of curling clubs.

Measurable Targets:

- Marked increase in new club memberships
- Marked increase in club use and event attendance
- Number of outlets and/or social media channels sharing reopening news



Key Messages

Curling = Community

Curling clubs are:

- Diverse
- Inclusive
- Accessible
- Volunteer-driven
- Gathering places
- Community Hubs

Curling Counts!

Curling rinks are vital and serve as a community hub for people of all ages to gather and engage in sport and active living. Curling also reaps significant economic benefits for local communities, and Canada as a whole:

- \$584 million in economic activity across Canada
- 3,400 jobs supported by curling
- \$186 million in wages and salaries supported by curling

We're Open! Come and Enjoy a Safe Return to Play

As Canada reels back from the COVID-19 pandemic, curling clubs provide a safe environment in which our communities can get back together, have some fun, and reconnect.

We're Here for You

The curling community is a diverse group of people from a wide variety of ages, backgrounds, and socioeconomic circumstances. Our clubs, games, events, and newsletters give you the unique opportunity to connect with constituents from all walks of life, from teachers and nurses to business owners and industry leaders.

Advocacy Roadmap

Who?

Who should we communicate with? Start local, but think big! Your local elected representatives at the municipal, provincial and federal level all have responsibilities that intersect with the interests of curling clubs.

Your curling club will need to target a unique set of federal, provincial, and local decision makers, which all depend where exactly your club is located. That's why we created [the following template](#) to help you easily identify your target audiences — all you've got to do is fill in the blanks:

Curling Club (City, Province)							
	Riding	Name	Position	Party	Email	Constituency #	Notes
Federal							
Provincial							
Local							

Let's say, for example, that you are from the Port Arthur Curling Club in Thunder Bay. This is what your list might ultimately look like:

Port Arthur Curling Club (Thunder Bay, ON)							
	Riding	Name	Position	Party	Email	Constituency #	Notes
Federal	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Hajdu, Patty	Member of Parliament	Liberal	Patty.Hajdu@parl.gc.ca	(807) 766-2090	Minister of Health
Provincial	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Gravelle, Michael	Member of the Provincial Parliament	Liberal	mgravelle.mpp.co.liberal.ola.org	(807) 345-3647	
Local	City of Thunder Bay	Mauro, Bill	Mayor	Liberal	bmauro@thunderbay.ca	(807) 625-3600	
	City of Thunder Bay (Current River)	Foulds, Andrew	City Councillor	N/A	afoulds@thunderbay.ca	(807) 766-9914	

As you can see, this spreadsheet allows you to clearly map out who your club's representatives are at the federal, provincial, and local levels. Not sure what riding your club is located in or who your representatives are? Don't worry, there are plenty of online resources to help you track them down.

At the federal level, Elections Canada has an [online tool](#) where you enter your postal code and they'll tell you what riding you're in and the name of Member of Parliament (MP), with a link to their parliamentary website where you can learn more about them and find their contact info.

Ontario has the same resource for finding your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) and can be accessed [here](#).

At the municipal level, resources and information vary but go to your town or city's website and you're sure to be able to find contact information for your municipal councillor and the mayor.

What?

Now that you've identified a list of key actors, the next step is to determine what to do, or how exactly to engage with these decision-makers. There are a variety of tactics which form the core of your advocacy toolbox and each one serves a strategic means to building and strengthening a relationship with political stakeholders. Below you will find a non-exhaustive list of some of these tactics which could bolster your campaign efforts. The first step is reaching out.

→ **Write to your elected representative:** Enclosed you'll find template introductory letters or emails you can send to your local councillor, mayor, MPP or federal MP. You want to build a relationship, so reach out and make them aware of the role you play in the community and seek an opportunity to meet - virtually or in person. This can be on a specific issue, or in this instance to make them aware of your curling clubs return to safe play, the role you play in the community and some of the challenges and concerns you have during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Attached you will find three template letters you can tailor to your club to send to your federal, provincial and local elected representatives.**

→ **Local Meetings:** Elected representatives meet stakeholders regularly so it is always important to do your best to stand out. In addition to written materials, a good way to make a mark is to bring a **leave behind**, something that is of low monetary value to keep within any lobbying gifting rules but still conveys the key points. For example, plastic curling rocks or keychains related to the sport would be a good memento. It's always smart to **capture a photo** of the meeting to share on your social channels for your membership and the public to see. After the meeting it's always good practice to send a **follow up** thanking them for their time and summarizing the key action items agreed upon, and to provide to them with the picture you took! Elected officials like to promote their community engagement so your picture may just end up in their community newsletter or on their social media. In order to ensure a smooth follow up, always make sure to grab the business card of the relevant staff person supporting the meeting. They will likely become your key contact person in that office.

→ **Invitations to Events:** Inviting an elected official to a game, event or annual general meeting is a good way to increase engagement. Even in an environment with virtual events, MPs (or MPPs, Mayors, and councillors) have been keen to engage with community members through virtual town halls and panels. When inviting an elected official to an event it's encouraged to give them some speaking time, perhaps opening or closing remarks so that they can have face time with local community members. Elected representatives are also always looking for good photo opportunities. If you invite them to a tournament, it would be ideal to have them engage in the sport as that will strengthen their connection and serve as a good photo opportunity for their social channels.

→ **Curling Club Tours:** Your curling club is itself a great asset in terms of local advocacy and showcasing the important role curling and the club itself play in the community. Consider inviting your local councillor, mayor, provincial or federal elected representatives to come for a tour. Perhaps propose a few days and times when there's some interesting activity taking place so that they can see your club in action.

→ **Newsletters:** If your curling club has a newsletter to communicate with members and supporters, consider offering your elected officials the opportunity to insert a message a few times a year. They're always looking to provide community updates and your newsletter is a good platform for that. Additionally, maintaining regular communication with key political stakeholders through a newsletter is a surefire way to build rapport with an MP over time. The newsletter for political stakeholders should be tailored to meet the strategic objectives and key messages identified by the overall campaign. It should update political stakeholders on curling clubs' impact in the community, perhaps even featuring a local community profile section. It should regularly include statistics and visuals of curling's impact in the community and expand that to curling's impact in Canada. Through on-the-ground stories, this Newsletter for political stakeholders can help to regularly communicate relevant information to key actors in an effort to continue building a rapport overtime with public officials.

→ **Social Media Campaign:** A strategic way to capture the attention of elected officials is by conducting an eye catching social media campaign. With an existing set of key messages and a catchy hashtag, a social media campaign can greatly expand the reach of your grassroots advocacy efforts, especially as it's a direct way to get players/ members to engage. A customizable suite of social media products, including a **tweet bank, graphics, shareables and video content**, are often available from the Northern Ontario Curling Association or Curling Canada and can be utilized as part of the #keepcurling campaign. A key tool for a successful social media strategy is to have a **content calendar**. Social media campaigns are more successful when content is posted in a targeted and coordinated manner. There are many tools available to assist in the execution of your social media campaign. For example, if you are running a visual-heavy campaign that is on multiple platforms, **Juicer** is a tool that can help you aggregate all the social content in a single space, for example on the Curling Canada website. It's valuable to have this centralizing function within your campaign because as it builds traction on different channels, visitors can see the aggregate impact of the campaign in one place on your main web page where they can also learn more about your organization.



Social Media Strategy: #keepcurling | #lecurlingcontinue

A simple way to organize a grassroots social media campaign through the network of local clubs is to centralize all the “customizable” materials in one online folder such as a Google Drive. This method requires creating one suite of “template products” including social graphics, shareables, sample tweets that each club can use and adapt to their local needs. The adaptation may include adding a local logo or more tailored language to reach local community members. There can also be a folder for shared promotional material such as the Curling Canada video or national tweets that can be pre-programmed on twitter to ensure the content flow on social channels is constant.

Facebook

- Facebook is the ideal platform to generate engagement through short videos. They should include closed captions for individuals scrolling and watching without sound. The ideal length for a Facebook video is between 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Instagram

- Instagram is the ideal platform for graphic shareables. Ideally the imagery in the graphic should be strong and the text minimal.
- Personalized pictures are also engaging. Content that showcases the sport and players will generate more engagement.

Twitter

- Twitter is the ideal platform for targeting specific audiences throughout your social media campaign. Twitter also provides detailed analytics that can help you to assess the efficacy of your posts and targeting and to pivot your strategy where necessary. It's a good way to engage your existing network and bolster your reach to secondary networks. It is also an effective platform to engage with political actors.




Where?

Advocacy can occur in multiple places. One of the most effective venues for advocacy is in the **local community**. When MPs or MPPs return to their constituency for breaks, that is an optimal time to engage. In a typical year, there are usually a number of designated events in the riding during the summer barbecue circuit. It is worth making an appearance and introduction at these events. Similarly, when they are in the riding for constituency work, that is an optimal time to organize an event to invite the local MP to attend and speak. For more information about when a federal MP is sitting in the House of Commons versus home for constituency work, reference the [parliamentary sitting calendar](#). Ontario has a similar calendar for the [legislature](#).

municipal, provincial and federal. For political actors, you can stay connected with them through regular email or mail correspondence. In the case of provincial and federal representatives in particular, you can write to them at their Hill Office or Constituency office depending on the issue. Letters to MP's community offices may be sent postage free. In addition to direct contact, it is also possible to engage regularly on social media by tweeting or responding to MP posts related to issues within your realm. Sometimes hopping on the phone and calling offices is also a good way to spark engagement, especially if you are trying to organize a lobby week or larger event requiring the attendance of multiple politicians.

Why?

Government relations is about more than just trading favours. It's about building **lasting, reciprocal, and meaningful relationships** with decision makers at all levels of government — from federal ministers to your city councillors. The key to successful lobbying is to approach your campaign as a long-term investment, rather than a one-off project that wraps up



as soon as you receive funding or when your objectives are met. Remember that politicians have their own interests and agendas, and you want to persuade them that this relationship is a worthwhile investment for them, too. By inviting them to speak with members, asking them to join the club for games or events, and giving them space in your newsletter, you are effectively **lending them a platform** to raise their profile among constituents and network with the community. Canada's curling clubs are the hub of their communities. At the end of the day, your relationship with decision makers should be **as much about what you can do for them** as it is about what they can do for you.

When?

Now! The COVID-19 pandemic, public health restrictions and the resulting economic downturn have all had major impacts on curling clubs. Now that we are able to return to safe play and resume club operations (with important safety measures), it's an opportune time to raise the profile of your local club, especially in the eyes of your local elected officials who have influence over various government recovery programs and supports.

The #keepcurling campaign is primed and ready to build momentum as a positive grassroots campaign this fall, just as the federal and provincial governments are planning for economic and social recovery programs across the country. Let's stand up and be heard now so that we can ensure Canada can #keepcurling throughout the recovery.

While it is recommended that stakeholders engage in annual, on-going advocacy to foster a strong relationship, there are some key times in the year when it's worth engaging with your elected representatives. The first key time period for advocacy is the **Budget Cycle**. Normally, the government releases a budget every year, which outlines key spending priorities for the government and serves as a guide for the government's updated policy agenda. [Budget 2019](#) for example showcases the government's priorities as it relates to good jobs, housing, seniors and pharmacare. Typically the government consults stakeholders widely in the lead up to a budget. This is known as the pre-budget consultation process. Stakeholders can submit briefs and set up lobby meetings around this time to communicate key priorities for their organization.

This tactic is especially important if you have a big budget 'ask(s)' before the government, such as funding proposals. Once the pre-budget cycle has passed and all the requests have been submitted through briefs and communicated through letters and meetings, the next major time to engage with political actors is after the budget is announced. The **post-budget process** can be varied depending on the nature of your advocacy that year. If there were specific announcements in the budget pertaining to your organization's work, then it's worth putting out a press release or public communication commenting on the matter. You may also wish to set up follow up meetings with key political officials to inquire more about the investments or announcements if the situation requires. Regardless of whether your advocacy was taken up or not, the post-budget engagement is crucial either to thank the MPs and MPPs you worked with prior to the budget for championing your issues or to push again for further consideration of your issues as the government continues to roll out their agenda. Either way, the engagement should be ongoing. Beyond the Budget Cycle, there are certain times throughout the year where it's worth engaging.

From your organization's perspective, you may have annual events such as AGM's or traditions that you would like to invite your local representatives to. This is an opportune moment to engage with them and showcase your club. The **summer barbecue circuit** previously mentioned where MPs and MPPs return home to their constituency during the summer break is another key moment for relaxed, relationship-building through local connections. Finally, an important moment for engagement which typically occurs prior to every election cycle is the **platform development process**. In advance of an election campaign, political parties will consult stakeholders for "bold" ideas to include in their election platform. As a national organization with a strong understanding of local sporting communities, this engagement process would be an ideal moment to convey your vision for how the government can better support your sport and in order for it continue delivering it's valuable impact to the community. Usually there will be MPs and MPPs from different parties leading the platform development committee that seeks to speak with stakeholders however proactively reaching out to these individuals is a way to ensure your perspectives are considered in the process. Lastly, specific to your club and organization, **Sports Day In Canada** (November 29) and **Curling Day In Canada** (February 27), are ideal days to execute an advocacy campaign, especially through social media as there will be increased awareness those days on sports and its impact on communities.

