



How To Write Letters to Government

Deciding to approach one's government about policy change is a big decision and a democratic responsibility which should not be taken lightly. When writing a letter about Israel, either urging change or applauding the status quo, it is important to make sure exactly what goal you are pushing for, know the facts surrounding the issue, and, if applicable, the issues surrounding the person you are writing to. Make sure to use correct titles as well. A Prime Minister is always addressed as "The Right Honourable;" a member of the House of Commons or House of Representatives as "The Honourable;" and "Senator." In order to get consideration, a letter should also be passionate, concise, and respectful. For example...

*Note: the following samples are in no particular chronology and do not necessarily reflect my own political biases or the opinions of NFTY. Please feel free to use the structure and form to shape a letter to anybody about anything from any perspective.

Dear Mr. Ignatieff,

As you head out of the Liberal Leadership Convention as the leader of the official opposition, you have the power to effect a great change on Liberal policy. While the Conservatives have many policies that repulse many people and the Liberals have many brilliant ideas for governing this country, a large amount of people cannot conscientiously support a party that, especially this summer, was frequently condemning Israel.

Almost throughout your tenure in the House of Commons, you have been one of the only Liberal MPs advocating for Israel. Yet, when cornered by the press, many were taken aback by your denunciation of Israeli war crimes. As you go into the party leadership, it is imperative that you revert back to your earlier positions, advocating for Israel's right to self-defence against enemies who seek its annihilation.

You have an opportunity to drastically improve the image of the Liberal Party while stealing what many consider Stephen Harper's only saving grace. I ask you, as a proud supporter of peace and independence, and as a proud supporter for Canadian ideals, to take the reins in standing by Israel.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

[Name]

This letter assumes that Michael Ignatieff was the winner of the Liberal Leadership Convention. Had the Liberals chosen another leader, then most of it could still be kept the same, though specific details about Ignatieff's actions would have to be tailored to the candidate to whom the letter is addressed.

Another example could be to the President, from a different perspective.

Dear President Bush,

While it is important to acknowledge any country's right to self-protection, it is also imperative to respect each nation's right to self-determination. Therefore, when the people of Gaza and the West Bank chose a



terrorist party to be their leaders, shunning and refusing contact or aid to them was a naive and inappropriate response.

In order to effectively combat the problems in the Middle East we must deal with the causes of problems, not merely the consequences. The Palestinian People have spoken clearly in favour a party that promises to free them from the isolation and poverty that have become their national hallmark. Cutting off communication with them is a policy that will serve merely to further isolate the Palestinian people, making them question why they are being punished for exercising their democratic freedoms, and making them angry towards the West and, particularly, the State of Israel.

It is neither practical nor moral to continue this draconian policy of hostility and alienation. I urge you to strongly reconsider the government's stance on this, in the interests of the peace and prosperity of the region.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

[Name]

In this case, the letter is largely philosophical. It is also useful to include a) historical examples to back up logical arguments, or b) the names and titles of actual bills or laws pertaining to the issue

If you feel comfortable, it is also recommended to include an email address, phone number, and mailing address. This way, the person reading the letter knows that you will one day be an eligible voter (and thus cares more), and also has a place where they can reach you if they want to follow up.

The freedom to write a letter to our government without fear of reprisal, and the responsibility of our government to listen to our feedback, is one of the most important ways for the grassroots to keep the powers-that-be in check. When it comes to a subject so many are passionate about, such as Israel, it is imperative that we write letters that truly come from the heart, and that will truly be respected.

We must never be radical. Instead, it is important to understand the divisiveness of the issue, the political dangers of taking a strong stance on it. Therefore, it is up to us, the educated and passionate future generation, to tell the people in office exactly why it is so imperative that they settle on a position, and that it should be the one we want.