



**RIDING ASSOCIATION
COMMUNICATIONS HANDBOOK**

Fall 2019

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This document is a starting point to help you get active as a volunteer working on communications on behalf of your riding association. It is just one component of the training materials available to Ontario Liberal Party members. We appreciate any feedback you have on how to continuously improve training offered by the Party. You can share suggestions at any time by emailing info@ontarioliberal.ca.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Everyone can communicate. Becoming an effective communicator requires practice and discipline. Communication is a skill that everyone can improve.

This document is not a set of hard and fast rules. It is a guide to help local Liberal activists think about how and why you are communicating and provide useful tools and tips for becoming an effective communicator.

This starts with a series of principles which should guide your planning, both in how you personally approach communications, and how you can mentor others who will communicate on behalf of your local Provincial Liberal Association (PLA).

It starts with **three rules**.

The three rules

1. Know your audience

The single most important rule in effective communications is to know and understand the audience who will receive and interpret your message. This means understanding, for example:

- What motivates them;
- How they prefer to receive information (e.g. email or text message)
- How they prefer to take action (e.g. forward an email, click a button)

Knowing your audience is the first principle of communications and guides every decision you make about how you communicate going forward.

2. Think before communicating

Communication is an innate human skill, and it is easy to respond by reflex. Disciplined communicators take a step back and think about their next communication. They ask themselves:

- What am I trying to accomplish?
- How is my audience likely to receive or action my communication?
- Is this the right method to reach my intended audience?

When approaching topics in the rest of the handbook, take a moment to ask yourself these fundamental questions.

3. Use the right tool for the job

All tools are not created equal, and each tool has a role to play. A communications tool such as email can reach one person or many people. A communications tool like social media can only reach many. When communicating, it's important to take a moment to think about what the right tool is for the job at hand.

COMMUNICATIONS 101

A. What we use communications for

In politics, we use communications for many objectives:

- Riding business, like executive committee meetings and annual general meetings;
- Membership recruitment and engagement;
- Fundraising campaigns;
- Event attendance;
- Organizing policy workshops and discussions;
- Inviting people to social activities;
- Engaging with our communities; and
- Spreading the Liberal message!

Communications support all of these activities.

B. Communications plan framework

To approach any communications project, it helps to have a plan.

Here are six questions you can ask yourself to make a communications plan:

1. *What is the objective?*
2. *Who is the audience?*
3. *How do we motivate that audience?*
4. *What's the message?*
5. *How should the message be delivered?*
6. *How will we know if it worked?*

Let's go through each of these one by one.

1. Objective

What are you trying to do? If you start with a clear goal, it will be easier to make a plan.

Here are some examples of a goal you might have:

- Get Liberal supporters in our riding to buy a membership for the current/coming year.
- Host a fundraising with 50 people.
- Have a volunteer appreciation BBQ for 75 people.
- Organize a meeting with community leaders.

2. Audience

Who do you need to reach your goal? Your audience will depend on your goal.

If you want everyone to buy a party membership, your audience is anyone who is a supporter but not a member, and anyone whose membership has expired or is about to expire.

If you're hosting a fundraiser, your audience could be anyone who has been a member of your riding association, along with some leaders from your community.

When you decide who your audience is, you need to think about how you'll get in touch with those people once you get to part 5: Delivery.

3. Motivation

How do you get your audience to do what you need? To answer this question, ask yourself what motivates your audience.

For party members who need to renew, the fear of missing out on party events and the desire to be part of a group that shares the same values are probably all the motivators you need.

Other audiences will need a bit more of a push. You need to argue that the cost of doing nothing is higher than doing what you're asking them to do. You'll have to put yourself not only inside the head of your audience, but think about how they feel, too.

4. Message

With your objective set, your audience chosen, and their motivation identified, it's time to write.

Knowing what motivates your audience will help you write a message to reach your objective—and if you're speaking to more than one audience, you may need more than one message.

Let's say you want people who used to be party members to renew their memberships. These are often the kind of folks who want to stay in the loop and not miss out on what the party is up to—like voting for a local candidate in a nomination meeting, social events, or big party-wide events like the Annual General Meeting.

Here's what the message could look like:

Hi! Our records show your membership in the Ontario Liberal Party has lapsed.

We would love to have you back in the Liberal family!

Membership allows you to help choose your local Liberal candidate, attend events both in your riding and across the province, and even vote for the party leader!

Most of all, it makes you part of a group that believes we should stand up for each other.

To renew your membership, call a member of your riding association executive from the list below, or fill out the form online at:

<http://ontarioliberal.ca/become-a-member/>

Thank you!

5. Delivery

Now that you've crafted your message, you need to figure out how to get it in front of people. There are more communication delivery methods than ever before, so it can be hard to know what to choose.

Luckily, you've already done part of the work by picking your audience, thinking about their motivations and writing your message. Let's take our sample membership renewal message—a few short sentences and a link. Perfect for an email!

6. Results

If you can measure your success, you can try new things to see what techniques work best.

Your results should be linked directly to your objective, but some methods of delivery make success easier to measure than others. For example, many email tools allow you to see how many people opened your message, which links they clicked on, and other metrics.

In the case of our membership renewal, the most important result will be how many people renew their membership.

C. Story and brand

Sharing your story

Every one of us has a reason why we got into politics, a reason why we're Liberals. If that story was powerful enough to get you into politics, it's the kind of story that can move others to take action.

Stories are powerful because they appeal to our hearts, not our heads. Scientists have studied this—humans usually make decisions based on feelings, not on reason.

That's why good political communication draws on our emotions and shows our values in action, helping feel why something matters, instead of just knowing it.

Stories allow us to express who we are, not as abstract principles, but as real events that happened to us. That's what gives stories power to move others.

We all have a powerful story to tell. We all have people in our lives—parents, siblings, teachers, TV characters, historical heroes, friends—whose stories have moved us to take action.

And we've all made choices when faced with big moments in our lives—painful memories, moments of hope, and calls to action.

The heart of your story is your choices, the moments in your life when you were faced with a decision and you made a choice guided by your values.

To find your story, ask yourself these questions:

- When did you first care about having your voice heard?
- When is a time you felt you absolutely had to act?
- Why did you feel you had the power to act?

The power of your story is to reveal something from those moments that was deeply meaningful to you and shaped your life. Not your deepest private secrets, but the events that shaped your public life.

Story of us

By telling a story of us, you can talk about values that inspire people to work together, because of what they have in common.

Just like telling your own story, big milestones in a community's history—its founding, crisis it has faced, or other events everyone remembers—are moments that shape its identity.

And just like telling your own story, the heart of a community's story is how it responded to those big milestones. Those are the choices that reveal the values shared by a community.

Story and brand

A good story informs a strong brand.

A brand is the values expressed by the kind of stories mentioned above.

Knowing your brand is important because it serves as a guide for all the work you do—how you communicate, which projects you focus on, how you campaign, etc. Even the way to run a riding association meeting should be consistent with the values established in the riding association's brand.

If you're ever wondering whether to do something as a riding association, ask if it is consistent with your local brand or not. If it strengthens the brand, do it. If it weakens the brand, think about skipping it.

D. Traditional communications

There are a ton of different ways to communicate. Some have been around for a while, and some have only come around in the last decade or two. Let's start with an overview of the six "traditional" communication methods you can use for your riding association.

1. Phone trees

Phone trees are a great way of spreading the word by picking up the phone. The way it works is that a team of people divide up a list of people to call about something to spread the word. The more people you have, the less work each person has to do!

Phone trees work great for fundraisers and events when you have a group of people who are willing to make a few calls.

2. Bulletin boards

You know your community well—and you know where there are bulletin boards where people advertise about all kinds of things, from piano lessons to community festivals. They can be found in churches, apartment buildings, community centres, and even on the street! Printing a few flyers and pinning them up on bulletin boards is a cheap and easy way of spreading the message about an event.

3. Printed literature

We've all seen it—candidate cards, endorsement flyers, and campaign materials. For short, we lump these all together and call them "lit."

There are a few different kinds of lit, including mass mailings, targeted mailings, and canvass pieces.

Mass mailing: This is a piece you want to go into all mailboxes in your riding, no matter who they are. It could be a newsletter, a community calendar, a candidate card, or anything else that you want to get to as many people as possible. They are expensive to have delivered because of the volume, but you can usually get a discount on the total cost because of the volume.

Targeted mailing: This is a piece you only want to go to specific people—whether they be party members, people who attended one of your events, volunteers, people who took a lawn sign, or maybe even people in a specific geographic area. Usually there is not only a specific target group, there's also a specific message for that target group.

Canvass pieces: The unique thing about a canvass piece is that you and your volunteers take it with you when you're going door to door. It could be something specifically targeted for the neighbourhood you're canvassing in or something you're giving to everyone, but it's hand delivered instead of mailed.

4. Local newspaper ads

Depending on where you live, buying an ad in the local paper doesn't go as far as it used to. Less people read the local paper now, especially if you live close to a big city like Ottawa or Toronto.

Even in big cities though, buying ads in the local paper can go a long way towards developing relationships with local media outlets—particularly if the media outlet caters to a particular cultural group or community.

Before buying an ad, ask around in your community to see how many people actually read the paper and what demographic they're in—that will help you to decide if an ad is worth it and how to target your message.

5. Press releases

Again, this one will depend on where you live. Small local papers are understaffed and starved for content. A quick email with a press release and a couple photos can lead to a quick, clean media hit with your local newspaper, news radio or TV station. Often these outlets will print the release in its entirety! If you're in a bigger city though, there's no guarantee that you'll get news coverage—it will all depend on how many news stories are taking place that day.

Take some time to make a list of the media outlets in your area and collect the names and emails of the people in charge of the news desk. Once you've built your list, you can use it to communicate about nomination meetings, local campaigns, or anything else you might think your community would want to read about.

6. Letters to the editor and op-eds

Like press releases, the effectiveness of an op-ed or letter to the editor is going to vary depending on where you live and what your local media landscape looks like.

Letters to the editor are great for being part of the conversation on a local news story or something else affecting your community.

Op-eds are a different beast. Because they're usually at least 300 words, it gives you more space to tell a story or make your case for something. Just keep in mind that people have short attention spans these days and may only read whatever headline the paper writes to summarize your piece. And yes, usually the paper selects the headline.

E. Digital communications

The internet and the popularity of smartphones have made it possible to communicate in a great number of new ways. Let's review some of these digital communication methods.

1. Email

Email is hugely versatile and widely used. A big email list is one of the best things you can build for your riding association.

Like printed literature, there are many different ways to use email—mass email blasts, targeted emails to lists, and of course, the personal email.

Mass email blasts: This is the email you want to go into everyone's inbox, no matter who they are. You probably get them all the time from us at party headquarters (sorry!). It could be a newsletter, a volunteer recruitment email, an event invitation, a fundraising email, candidate card, or anything else that you want to get in front of as many people as possible. Plus, it's free!

Targeted email blasts: This is a piece you only want to go to specific people—whether they be party members, people who attended one of your events, volunteers, people who took a lawn sign, or maybe even people in a specific geographic area. Usually there is not only a specific target group, there's also a specific message for that target group.

Personal email: Personal email is still important because we're more likely to respond to it. Many email providers, like Google's Gmail and Microsoft Outlook have filters that send anything that goes to a big list straight to the spam folder.

Pro-tip: If you have at least one specific recipient in the "to" field of the email, and not just the "cc" or "bcc" field, it will be less likely to go to spam. It's wise to use your own email for this field so you're the only one who receives any replies.

2. Social media

Did you know that Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have all been around for almost a decade? Of the three, Facebook is the biggest platform—with over six million users in Ontario alone.

Let's review the audiences of each of these platforms and which platform works the best for different communications needs.

Facebook: The world's biggest social network is used less now by young people under 35, but more and more by moms, dads, grandmas and grandpas. Pictures matter more than words here, videos matter more than pictures, and you have to compete with dozens of distractions to get your message across. Posting lots of simple content with good pictures or a short video (under 15 seconds) will help you succeed here.

Facebook is also a large, cheap advertising platform that extends to the other social network it owns—Instagram. Ads can be targeted to people's interests, geographic location, gender and age. You can also make a **Facebook page** for your riding with a lot of easy customization options. More on that later.

Twitter: If Facebook is for moms and dads, twitter is for news junkies and journalists. If you want to get your message out to regular people, Twitter is not the best place to do it. What Twitter is great for is keeping up to date with what local leaders are saying and engaging with them.

Instagram: It's what all "the kids" are doing these days! Home of the selfie, close-ups of food, and landscape photos, having a high quality pictures to post here is a must. Instagram is a great platform to showcase your riding's activities—events, volunteers, fundraisers, announcements, and door-knocking all make for great photo ops. Especially popular amongst that 18-35 demographic.

F. Try it! Make your own communications plan

Using the communications framework outlined earlier, try picking an objective and making your own communications plan.

Here are some sample objectives to try:

- Promote a fundraising dinner and sell 50 tickets
- Go on a membership drive and increase memberships in your riding by 20%
- Year-end fundraising campaign to raise \$5,000
- Host a policy workshop with 15 attendees
- Promote the ABC monthly giving program and get 10 new monthly donors

A. Communications framework recap

1. What's the objective?
2. Who's the audience?
3. What motivates that audience?
4. What message will motivate that audience to achieve your objective?
5. How should that message be delivered to that audience?
6. How will you measure results?

B. Creating a rollout plan

Once you've planned a communications project using the communications framework, it helps to plan out your communication tasks in a calendar to keep you on track and give you an quick overview of all the things you have to do. Sometimes we call this a rollout out plan or comms calendar.

Here's a sample template for what a communications rollout could look like:

Membership drive in advance of Spring Annual General Meeting (AGM)			
	January	February	March
Email	<p>Email to riding executive members to ask for volunteers <i>Jan. 15 (Bob)</i></p> <p>Email inviting volunteers to phone bank <i>Jan. 23 (Shauna)</i></p>	<p>Emails to all past members of party in riding to ask them to renew membership in advance of March 14 AGM <i>Feb 3, 5, 7, 8, 11 (Frankie, Tyrese)</i></p>	<p>Official notice of riding AGM to all current and past members <i>March 1 (OLP staff)</i></p> <p>Emails to all members and past members to tell them about AGM and getting them to renew membership <i>March 3, 5, 7 (Tyrese)</i></p>
Facebook	<p>Post on riding association Facebook page advertising phone bank Feb 10 <i>Jan 30 (Penelope)</i></p>	<p>Post pics of phone bank with link to buy membership in riding <i>Feb 11 (Penelope)</i></p>	<p>Post pics advertising AGM with link to buy membership <i>March 7 (Harinder)</i></p> <p>Post pics at AGM to show success <i>March 14 (Harinder)</i></p>
Twitter	<p>Tweet advertising phone bank Feb 10 <i>Jan 30 (Penelope)</i></p>	<p>Tweet pics of phone bank with link to buy membership in riding <i>Feb 11 (Penelope)</i></p>	<p>Tweet pics advertising AGM with link to buy membership <i>March 7 (Harinder)</i></p> <p>Tweet pics at AGM to show success <i>March 14 (Harinder)</i></p>
Instagram	<p>Instagram story advertising phone bank Feb 10 <i>Jan 30 (Harinder)</i></p>	<p>Post pics of phone bank with link to buy membership in riding <i>Feb 11 (Penelope)</i></p>	<p>Tweet pics advertising AGM with link to buy membership <i>March 7 (Penelope)</i></p> <p>Tweet pics at AGM to show success <i>March 14 (Shauna)</i></p>
Phone tree	<p>Phone tree by riding executive to recruit volunteers <i>Jan 16 (Bob)</i></p>		

You can see that the rollout has clear tasks, due dates, and roles. Don't forget to measure your results so you can adjust your approach for next time!

EMAIL FOR RIDINGS

A. Building your list

The key to great email communications starts with building a list of people you can reach out to.

Start with Liberalist. Liberalist tags and tracks Ontario Liberal Party contacts in your riding: People who have taken lawn signs in an election, party members, donors, volunteers, and people who have asked to stay in the loop about all things Liberal in their community.

Every riding association also has a portal on their web page with a link to sign up for local newsletters called, “Get the latest”. You can check out your riding association web page by looking in the directory on our web site here: <https://ontarioliberal.ca/provincial-liberal-associations/>. Directing people here is a great way to grow your list.

If you have a conversation with someone and they’re interested in hearing more about what we’re up to in your community, ask them for their email! Then you can add them to the list using the portal for your local web page, which guarantees that they’ll be on your list.

Facebook, Twitter and to a lesser extent Instagram are great channels you can use to encourage people to sign up on your list as well. Post the sign-up link on Facebook and Twitter, and insert the link into the “bio” section of your riding associations Instagram profile to cover all your bases.

B. Creating a newsletter

A great way to use email for ridings is by making a newsletter to send out regularly. You can pack it with whatever content you like—messages about local issues, upcoming local events, pictures and stories from volunteers, buttons to allow people to donate to your riding, and more!

Here are some tips for creating a good newsletter:

Make a plan: How often will you send the newsletter out? Who’s going to write it? Who will it be sent to? These kinds of questions are all good to determine in advance.

Pick a tool: There are many, many great email tools out there including the built-in email tool in Liberalist. There are also many other free, easy to use email tools available like MailChimp, Campaigner, MailerLite, SendPulse, SendinBlue and Zoho Campaigns. Choose whichever email tool works best for you.

Create your template: Spend some time when you craft your first newsletter to think about the content you want to have in every single newsletter you’re going to send. This isn’t to say you can’t refine your template later, but picking a format right off the bat will save time down the road for you and your team, and create a brand format that your audience will start to become familiar with.

C. Crafting messaging

For starters, don’t forget the six-step communications framework:

- Objective
- Audience
- Motivations
- Message
- Delivery
- Results

Writing content

Keep it short: Respect your audience’s time. The more words you write, the less likely your audience is to read them. Try writing what you want to say then ask yourself how you can trim down the content. Edit accordingly.

Bullets and lists: Bullets and lists help keep your writing brief and to the point. Leave out extra words and just tell your reader what they really need to know.

Conclusions first: Always begin with your conclusion(s) first. Starting with conclusions helps your reader to remember your key message. As they read on, your message will be reinforced because they’ve already heard it.

Tone and writing style

Use action words and avoid the “passive” voice to keep your reader moving:

Active: *I broke the window.*

Passive: *The window was broken by me.*

Avoid extra words like ‘just’, ‘regardless’, and ‘that’:

👎 *Regardless, she says that I should just keep it simple.*

👍 *She says I should keep it simple.*

Contractions are great and help keep your sentences short, your language plain, and your writing conversational. Use them!

Think about your target audience

Thinking about your target audience will help you to craft your message in a way that appeals to that audience. As Liberals, we want our message to reach Ontario families—specifically millennials who feel that they’ll be the first generation to be worse off than the one before them, and the sandwich generation who are caught between trying to support their children and taking care of their aging parents.

Use key messages from the Party

Try to amplify the key messages from the party in a way that makes sense for your community. Borrow from the *Weekend Wire* and the *Nitty Gritty* to see how we’re making the case to stand up against Doug Ford’s Conservatives at Queen’s Park, and try to add local flavour that will make sense for your friends and neighbours. Use your judgement—what works across Ontario generally won’t always work in all 124 ridings.

Measure twice, cut once

Every time you write remember to get someone else to check it over before you share it with the public. Create an editing team with your communications committee and make sure to share your work with other team members before going public with it.

Mistakes with grammar and details happen from time to time, but your audience doesn’t need to know that. Always edit before you share so you’re not stuck doing damage control after it’s too late.

D. Turning online action into real world action

To turn your digital success into results, you've got to help your audience make that leap to doing something offline. Here are two tips:

1. They won't do anything if you don't ask

Making a clear, simple ask to your audience is important. Without it, the conversation stops. If it's a fundraising email, ask them to donate a specific amount. If it's an event, ask them to show up. If it's something you want them to share with their friends, ask them to pass it on.

2. Use buttons and links

If you're asking someone reading your email to take action somewhere else, make it as easy as possible for them to do so by including a button or link to where you want them to go. The fewer times they have to click to get there, the more likely they are to get all the way to the end.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR RIDINGS

A. Building your profiles

Staff in the Ontario Liberal Party office are always available to help you with any troubleshooting. Just call us at 416-961-3800.

Setting up a Facebook account

- a. In your web browser address bar, visit <http://www.facebook.com>

- b. On the home screen, enter the information requested under “Sign Up”

- c. Enter your primary email address and password to find friends already using Facebook (You can skip this step if you are not comfortable with it)

- d. Fill out some basic profile information

- e. Add a photo (skip this step if one is not readily available)

- f. You’re now on Facebook. Navigate along the top menu to find a link to edit your profile, customize your account, and adjust your privacy settings.

- g. Basics to try once you’re comfortable with the navigation bars:
 - Search for and add someone you know as a ‘friend’
 - Send a message to a friend or even someone who isn’t yet a friend
 - Search for the “Ontario Liberal Party” and ‘Like’ the page
 - Hint: www.facebook.com/OntarioLiberalParty
 - Find a news story about a favourite topic, and ‘share’ the story via your Facebook status
 - Try to find some influential members of your community on Facebook

- h. Sign in to your email account (the one you used to sign up for Facebook) to confirm your registration

Setting up a Facebook page for your riding

- a. Go to Facebook in your web browser

- b. In the top right of the menu, click “Create” and select “Page” from the drop down menu.

- c. Under the “Community or Public Figure” option, click “Get Started”

- d. Write the full name of your riding association, e.g. Ajax Provincial Liberal Association

- e. Select an appropriate category (we suggest political organization)

- f. Upload a profile photo for your page (use the OLP logo if nothing else is available)

- g. Upload a photo for your page’s cover photo (we suggest a picture of your most enthusiastic looking volunteers!)

h. Invite your friends to like the page and grow your audience! There is a search box on the right hand side of the page you can use to search for facebook friends to invite to like your page. Identify Liberals in your own friends list and click “Invite” to send them an invitation to like the page

i. You can add your riding association website to the Facebook landing page using the following steps:

- Click on the “...” button to the right of the “Liked”, “Following”, and “Share” buttons in the middle of the page
- Click “Edit Page Info” from the drop down menu that appears
- Add your riding association website in the website section. You can find your riding association website in the directory on the OLP website here: <https://ontarioliberal.ca/provincial-liberal-associations/>
- You can also add the email address of the riding association president, or another member of the riding association in the email section.

Setting up a donate button on your Facebook page to get monthly donors

a. Click on the “Add button” on the right hand side of the page under the cover photo

b. Click the “Contact You” section and select the “Sign Up” option

c. Click “Next” in the bottom right hand corner

d. Click “Website link” and add your riding association monthly donation page.

Getting your button to automatically go to monthly donations for your riding association is a bit tricky:

- First, find your three digit electoral district number visit <https://www.elections.on.ca/en/resource-centre/electoral-districts.html> and entering your postal code
- Once you have your code, plug it in at the end of this website formula: <https://ontarioliberal.ca/donate/?monthly=true&pla=xxx>

For example, the link to donate monthly and directly to the Ajax Provincial Liberal Association is: <https://ontarioliberal.ca/donate/?monthly=true&pla=001>

e. Take the link you have just made and paste it into the field provided

f. Click “Save”, then “Finish”

Setting up a Twitter account for your riding

a. In your web browser address bar visit: <http://twitter.com>

b. On the right hand side of the screen, click “Sign Up”

c. Enter the name of your riding association and the phone number or email you want to have associated with the account

d. Click through the steps and fill out the biography, select the interests of your riding association, and choose a profile picture (if none is available, use the OLP logo)

e. When you get to suggestions of people to follow, browse by interest and follow a few people or organizations of interest to your local community. Unlike Facebook, Twitter isn’t only for ‘friends’

-
- f. Find your friends! If you're using one of Twitter's recognized email services, you'll be able to find friends via their email addresses
-
- g. After you complete all these steps, you'll be at a landing page and prompted to get started
-
- h. Take a moment to select your default font size, colours and whether you want a light or dark colour scheme (whatever is most comfortable for your eyes)
-
- i. On the left hand side, click "Profile" to go to your new twitter feed
-
- j. Click "edit profile" to change your personal settings and profile information. You can change your cover photo, add your riding association website, and add your location!
-
- k. Send out your first tweet. Interact with someone online and see if you can get a response
-
- l. Find the Ontario Liberal Party by typing **@OntLiberal** in the search field in the top right hand corner, and follow us. Now find the party leader, other MPPs and past OLP candidates
-
- j. Experiment with a hashtag. In the live search bar at the top right of the page, search "#onpoli". What do you immediately notice?
-
- k. Send out a tweet with the hashtag #onpoli to join in the conversation about Ontario politics
-
- l. Sign in to your email account (the one you used to sign up for Twitter) to confirm your registration. If you used a mobile phone to sign up, enter the code texted to you to confirm the account

Setting up an Instagram account for your riding

-
- a. First, grab a smartphone. Instagram is designed for smartphones, not computers
-
- b. Download the Instagram app from Google Play, App Store, or the equivalent, to your phone
-
- c. Once the app has been downloaded and installed, click "sign-up"
-
- d. Click through the sign-up instructions, entering your riding association's username (the character limit is tight, so you may have to use acronyms)
-
- e. Pick a profile photo to identify your riding association, and you're done!
-
- g. Select "edit profile" to add information to your account. Adding your PLA website and entering a short bio for your PLA is a good start
-
- h. Follow Liberals! Also, following your volunteers on Instagram is a great way to ensure they can see pictures you post, share them, and makes it easier for you to "tag" them in photos
-
- i. Try taking and posting your first photo! (Hint: volunteers/people make for the best pictures!)

B. Growing your follower list

Content is supreme. Create a schedule to post regularly

Social media platforms are invaluable tools for riding associations to demonstrate involvement in the community and engage voters. 25 million Canadians are now on Facebook—including nearly half of all Canadian seniors. In addition, over a third of Canadians use Instagram weekly.

You should try to post on social media if your riding association is:

- Attending or hosting events
- Canvassing or speaking to voters

- Doing anything related to riding association or party business (riding association AGMs, social events, party-wide annual general meetings and events)
- Promoting organizations in the riding
- Sending holiday greetings

...or really anything interesting you feel would help to make your riding association be as open and welcoming to voters as possible. There may be exceptions, of course. Be sure to use your best judgement, and ask for consent when photographing/posting about others.

Be timely with your posts, and if you have many posts to publish in a day, or many events to attend (as often happens closer to an election), this can be challenging.

To help you get through all your posts, schedule a time during the day to take a few minutes to publish everything you want to get up on social media. You can also pre-draft the captions for your posts ahead of time.

Things to remember when you post

Try to plan ahead

Look at your upcoming calendar and think about how it can translate to posts on all social media (not just Twitter).

Post often

Aim for every day!

Try to be timely

Especially if something is time sensitive, like attending an event or breaking news.

Space out your posts

If posts are not time sensitive, try to spread them out throughout the day. There are tools you can use to schedule posts in advance to help you with this. Facebook lets you schedule posts in advance, and Twitter has free tool called TweetDeck you can use to schedule tweets.

Tag people

Tag people and organizations using their Facebook, Twitter or Instagram handles.

Include hashtags

If you're on Twitter, try to keep it to one or two (like #onpoli or #FordCutsHurt), but if you're on Instagram, go nuts!

Include location

Let people know where you are by including the location of your post if possible.

Keep captions to one line

Less is more! Let your photo do the talking.

Post multiple photos

But make sure you think about which one you want to be first—because the first photo gets the most attention.

Avoid posting photos with awkward facial expressions

Try to never post an unflattering photo of someone.

Write once, paste twice

Use the same caption on Instagram as you do on Facebook if you want to save time.

Always post with a picture or video

You far more likely to get likes and comments on your post if you use a picture—and even more if you post with a video!

C. Tips for taking great photos

Start with a smart phone camera

Smart phone cameras are preferred for social media purposes, as they make posting easy. The iPhones have great cameras, but Samsung, Google Pixel series, and others, have caught up.

Avoid blurry photos

Avoid zooming too much or using filters in a way that compromises the quality of the photo.

Take lots of photos

We can't emphasize this one enough. Aim to have a variety of photos. Not only multiple photos but photos from different angles, emphasizing your presence or participation. For example, if someone from your riding association is speaking at an event, try to take a photo closer to the front to clearly capture them speaking. You may then want to work towards the back of a crowd to show how many people are in attendance. Be sure to get pictures of your riding association members speaking with any VIPs in attendance, too.

Avoid having too many staged photos

Try to post candid photos of your volunteers and riding association members listening, laughing, smiling, etc. For group photos staging people is often essential. Be bossy!

Get good lighting

Often this will be out of your control, as events can be held in darker places. Still, try to move around towards better lighting so your pictures will be seen more clearly.

Grab a selfie

Including pictures you and your volunteers take of yourself which is a great way to make photos more fun and engaging!

Filters

If you're going to use a filter from Instagram, be consistent with which one you use to establish the look and feel of your photos.

Captions

It helps to have the same team writing captions to keep the tone of your posts consistent.

D. Video content

On Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, you can post pre-recorded videos. You can use the same content for every social media site, but **keep your video to 60 seconds or less**, the shortest maximum video length of all three video channels (Instagram).

Both Facebook and Instagram offer a feature that alerts followers you're doing a live video. These videos tend to get more engagement when live, but are still available after you finish broadcasting.

Instagram (and now Facebook) stories are different from regular social media posts. Stories are more casual, and can include video or picture posts, but expire within 24 hours. Stories are a great place to take videos which showcase what you are currently doing. There are tons of fun filters, emojis, and features you can use to engage your audience, like polls and looped videos called "boomerangs".

As a general rule, almost everything that works well on Instagram works on Facebook, but not everything that works on Facebook works on Instagram. Track your results and see what works for you in your community.

If you're looking for examples on how to use social media, try following members of caucus or other politicians to see what they're doing.

E. Crafting messaging

Keep it short

Respect your audience's time. The more words you write, the less likely your audience is to read them. Try writing what you want to say then ask yourself how you can trim down the content. Edit accordingly.

Bullets and lists

Bullets and lists help keep your writing brief and to the point. Leave out extra words and just tell your reader what they really need to know.

Conclusions first

Always begin with your conclusion(s) first. Starting with conclusions helps your reader to remember your main message. As they read on, your message will be reinforced because they've already heard it.

F. Turning online action into real world action

Just like with emails, to turn your digital success into results, you need to help your audience make that leap to doing something offline. Here are two tips:

1. They won't do anything if you don't ask

Making a clear, simple ask to your audience is important. Without it, the conversation stops. If it's an event, ask them to show up. If it's something you want them to share with their friends, ask them to pass it on.

2. Use buttons and links

If you're asking someone scrolling through Facebook to take action somewhere else, make it as easy as possible for them to do so by including a button or link to where you want them to go. On Facebook and Twitter, including a link automatically generates a preview of the external website—giving your post a bit more pop.

LETTERS AND LITERATURE FOR RIDINGS

A. Choosing your product

Campaign literature overview

Campaign “lit” and other printed materials are an important part of your communications strategy, allowing you to get your message out in a time-efficient manner to large numbers of people. If you plan ahead, these materials can be surprisingly affordable.

Printed materials are only one part of your campaign, however. Use your print materials to drive voters to other venues of communication, whether it’s by getting them to pick up the phone and call your office, or to follow you on Twitter.

Here’s a quick overview of some of the different kinds of printed materials you could use for your riding association or a political campaign:

- Cards (i.e. candidate cards, issue cards, advance poll cards, GOTV cards)
- Brochures (i.e. candidate brochures, issue brochures, OLP brochures)
- Flyers (i.e. issue flyers, invitation flyers)
- Posters (i.e. leader posters, candidate posters, event posters)

Pick the right product to achieve your objective

Content and images will depend on what kind of piece you are doing; a poster will have very different content than an in-depth issues brochure. Think about what you want to accomplish with your piece, then try to determine the best way (format, content, message, visuals) to do that.

B. Crafting messaging

You only have two seconds

Think about the people who will read this lit piece when it is delivered to them—they see a poster, they get a letter in the mail, or they read something after speaking to a volunteer.

Your window is from the mailbox to the recycling—that’s the time you must use to communicate your message. Why so short? Because the reality is that most of the campaign literature we spend hours and hours creating ends up in the bin—so you have to make your point before it gets there.

Not everyone will chuck your lit piece away, so make sure there is some strong content for readers who take a little more time with it. Some people will read the whole piece front to back—make sure you have strong content for them as well. Think of three distinct audiences your piece must speak to: the two second audience, the one minute audience, and the five minute audience.

Go back to the communications framework

When creating your lit piece, remember the communications framework and use it as a guide:

- Objective
- Audience
- Motivations
- Message
- Delivery
- Results

Tips for writing a good lit piece

Text: Less is more

Time and resources are limited, so you will be tempted to cram as much content as possible into certain pieces. Resist that temptation! People's eyes will glaze over if they see a wall of text, and the result will be that they read none of it. Don't drown out your key messages with extra text. Most people will actually read more if you have less text. You can (and should) drive people to your social media accounts for more information. Interested people from your community will actually visit, and once there they will see a lot more of your messaging.

Don't get lost in the numbers

In government, people tend to think in dollar figures. An average person may not care about an investment of \$x million in a local hospital; they don't know what that means (or worse, they just might be cynical about it). But lowering emergency room wait times at the hospital by an hour, or bringing an MRI machine to the local community, or opening a new wing with 30 more beds is much more likely to be impressive—and remembered. That's because it means something in real life to the reader.

Don't forget to proofread!

Have several people read over your materials to ensure the text flows logically, the facts are correct, and that there are no spelling or grammar errors. Nothing is more embarrassing than a silly typo.

Make it readable

Make your content easier to read by using headings, bullet points, text boxes, and font styles (e.g., boldface). But don't use too many of these at once, as your piece may appear too busy or cluttered.

Include photos and graphics

A photo is worth a thousand words—remember that when you think you want more text! People like pictures, so include as many photos and images as possible to add visual appeal. A photo of that brand new hospital in your riding, complete with smiling doctors and the Liberals who made it happen, will be far more powerful than a paragraph of text will. If you want to show progress or comparisons, chart graphics are more effective than a block of text.

Multiple languages

Remember that if you are creating bilingual (and multilingual) pieces, your text will have to be much shorter than if your piece is only in English. Note that right-to-left languages like Arabic, Urdu, Persian, or Hebrew present special design challenges (programs like Photoshop or Word may try to alter the text to left-to-right, making it completely incomprehensible). It is extremely important to have a speaker of the language read your final proof before you go to print.

Translation

Translation can be expensive and difficult to do at the last minute. Ensure you plan ahead for translation, and it is strongly recommended that you have one or more people for whom the language is their mother tongue review the translation you receive before going to print. Note that just because someone speaks a language it doesn't mean they will make a good translator.

C. Designing your piece

Start with the FACTs! Fonts, Approved pictures, Brand colours, and Templates

F is for Fonts

Every brand has its own look and feel, including political parties. Using the font used by the party helps to keep your designs consistent with the brand, which makes it easy for your audience to recognize.

The Ontario Liberal Party uses Gotham. This isn't a font computers come with, as it's a proprietary font, so you will need to download and install a licensed copy.

That's easier said than done of course. On Windows, you can download many fonts for free by visiting fontsqirrel.com. Search for the font you want and download the ".ttf" file, which is a file that Windows uses to install a font. As a proprietary font licensed to the Ontario Liberal Party you won't find it on free sites. Contact OLP to get the font folder sent to you.

Once you've downloaded the file, find it on your desktop or in your downloads, right-click on it and select the "Extract All..." option, then follow the prompts on your screen. Now that you've extracted the files, find them in the new folder. (File names look like: "font-name.ttf"). Right click on each of your new fonts and click "Install." All done!

A is for Approved pictures

Take a look at your Facebook newsfeed. Count how many posts and ads you see that don't have some kind of picture or video in them. Not many, are there? That's because the old cliché is true: A picture is worth a thousand words.

Since TV news came on the scene in the 1960s, great communication has been less about how something READS and more how something LOOKS. Now with your audiences spending more and more time on their smart phones to check email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and dozens of other apps, high quality pictures are more important than ever. A couple of tips:

- Take as many high quality photos of your candidate, volunteers and voters as you can. Most new smartphone cameras take great photos.
- Make sure you have PERMISSION to use the photo.

C is for Colours

On Wednesdays, we wear Red. Actually, every day. Because we're Liberals! Canadians associate red with the Liberal Party. Using it in communications helps to maintain brand consistency and make it easier for voters to find us.

The Ontario Liberal Party uses a particular shade of red, Pantone 186, that is identified by the hex code: #ed1b36. Computer programs read colours in many forms, with a hex code being one of the most common. Another common method is RGB. To find out what a hex code is in RGB, or vice versa, just search for RGB to hex to find a converter. The OLP red hex code translates to R237, G27, B57 in RGB! Remember that you must use CMYK or spot colours (Pantone) for printing documents with a professional printer. The CMYK breakdown is 0/100/84/0. Your printer will know what this means.

Just like with your fonts, make sure all your colours are consistent across all your designs. This keeps your brand strong and saves work!

T is for Templates

Templates. Are. Time-savers. Writing and design can eat up hours of your day. In politics, that is usually time we don't have, especially if you are trying to complete multiple communications projects at once, or if you are working as a volunteer who has little time to give to begin with.

Enter templates, a.k.a. using things that worked before again. This takes the pressure off because you don't have to come up with a brilliant, original layout design, and will save you time when you submit your draft to your candidate who will see something they recognize and are already comfortable with, which means fewer revisions (a.k.a. the mortal enemy of graphic designers everywhere).

Keep it simple

Audiences today have short attention spans. So you have a limited amount of time to get your message across. This can be tough when you're communicating about a complex issue, or when you have dozens of great photos to share. But if you try to communicate everything, you end up communicating nothing.

This applies to writing and graphic design. A good rule of thumb is to ask, "How can we say this with fewer words? How can we say it with smaller words?" Try prioritizing what you think the most important part of the piece is, focus on that and cut everything else. That's a good place to start.

Let it breathe

One of the most important things to remember about good design is that you need to give your content the space to breathe. It makes your work look clean and polished, instantly elevating the quality of the piece..

That means not being afraid of blank space! (what professional designers call 'negative' or 'white' space). Just the right amount of blank space will draw the eye of your audience and put the spotlight exactly where you want it to be.

Tools: Canva and other web-based design programs

While professional designers are likely to use the Adobe Creative Suite tools like Photoshop or InDesign, casual users can often get the job done with free, easy to use web-based tools like Canva.

It contains hundreds of free to use graphics, stock photos, templates, and fonts. When you move around text boxes, images and graphics in Canva, you can either snap it to line up with the edge of your frame or another design element, or command the program to align multiple elements along an edge or a centre.

Canva is free to use, but you have to pay a subscription if you want to take advantage of some of the more robust features, like the ability to have multiple people on one account or some of their graphics and stock photos.

Practice is play

The more you work on your graphic design skills, the better you'll get. Try out ideas. Get feedback from people. Refine. Try again. With practice, you can soon make a decently designed piece.

D. Production and distribution

Once you have written and designed your piece, it's time to print it and deliver it.

Printing

The first thing to think about is how you are going to produce the quantity you need. If the quantity is small, you may decide it would be simpler to do it yourself with your home printer. If it's a bit bigger, it's probably something you can ask a retail printer like Staples or The Printing House to help out with.

For larger quantities or specialty items, however, you will need to seek a professional vendor.

There are many small operations that do this kind of things across the province, but they aren't household names.

To find a vendor, try entering "professional printing services" into an internet search. You can also ask the volunteers on your riding association and the local campaign team from the last election who they used. If you're still having trouble, call the Ontario Liberal Party office at 416-961-3800 and we will try to point you in the right direction.

Bundling, delivery and mailing

Printing the materials is half the battle—the next task is getting it delivered where you need it to go. How you do this depends on the material you are sending and the volume that you want to send.

For large volumes, you may want to pay a mailing house to take care of the delivery. To find a vendor, try entering "mailing house" into an internet search. As with printers, you can also ask the volunteers on your riding association and the local campaign team from the last election.

If the volume is smaller, consider using people power to save on the cost. Folding, stuffing, sealing and stamping envelopes are time honoured volunteer traditions that can be accomplished in an evening together over a couple of large pizzas. You can ask your volunteers to help you with the delivery as well if the literature quantity is small.

LOCAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT FOR RIDINGS

A. Building your list

Take some time to make a list of the media outlets in your area and collect the names and emails of the people in charge of the news desk.

Do some research to collect data on their audience—circulation data, viewership numbers, whatever you can find to help you determine how big a group pays attention to the outlet in question. The team at OLP has some of this information and can assist you.

Once you've built your list, you can use it to communicate about nomination meetings, local campaigns, or anything else you might think your community would want to read about.

Be sure to get in touch with the reporters in your area to open the lines of communication. That way when you send them something later on that you would like them to cover, you're not coming in as a complete stranger.

B. Creating a release template

Press release pointers

Structure

Try using this structure when writing a press release:

- Headline: the main idea
- Subheader: supporting quote or idea
- Lead: the main idea
- Best quote
- Provide context
- Why this matters
- Background
- Supporting quote
- Final word

Keep it short

Respect the time of your audience. This isn't an essay with a page count or word count you absolutely must hit, and the more words there are the less likely your audience is to read them. Try writing what you want to say, then ask yourself how to cut down the copy length. Edit accordingly.

Bullets and lists

Bullets and lists help keep your writing brief and to the point. Leave out extra words and just tell your reader what they really need to know.

Conclusions first

Always begin with your conclusion(s) first. Starting with conclusions helps your reader to remember your main message. As they read on, your message will be reinforced because they've already heard it.

Use key messages from the Party

Try to amplify the key messages from the party in a way that makes sense for your community. Borrow from the *Weekend Wire* and the *Nitty Gritty* to see how we're making

the case to stand up against Doug Ford’s Conservatives at Queen’s Park, and try to add local flavour that will make sense for your friends and neighbours. Use your judgement—what works across Ontario doesn’t always work in all 124 ridings.

Measure twice, cut once

Every time you write remember to get someone else to check it over before you share it with the public. Create an editing team with your communications committee and make sure you share your work with other team members before going public with it. Mistakes with grammar and details happen from time to time, but your audience doesn’t need to know that. Always edit before you share so you’re not stuck doing damage control after it’s too late.

Sample press release format	
Date	FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE DAY/MONTH/YEAR
Headline (Bold, Caps)	NEW BOILER NEEDED FOR BUTTONWOOD SCHOOL
Subheading	<i>Etobicoke students deserve the best environments to learn in</i>
Lead	ETOBICOKE—A new boiler at Buttonwood School will provide our children with a safe and comfortable environment for learning, says Joe Liberal, the President of the Etobicoke Centre Provincial Liberal Association.
Best quote	<p>“Modern facilities are essential to helping our children do their very best in school, so they can do their very best in life,” Liberal said.</p> <p>“This government’s priorities are all out of whack. They’ve cut billions from our schools. Our community understands publicly funded education is the key to our children’s future and our province’s future, but this government isn’t delivering.”</p>
Provide context	Joe Liberal made the comments after a meeting with parents and community leaders at Buttonwood School.
Why this issue matters	There is a growing concern amongst Etobicoke residents that the government is not investing enough in school maintenance or upgrades after they slashed maintenance and repair funding for schools last year.
Background	The Ford Conservative government cut the \$100 million school repair fund last year.
Supporting quote	<p>The President of the Buttonwood School Parents’ Association said they had a good discussion with Hunter about the impact the Ford Conservatives’ cuts were having on their kids.</p> <p>“A father himself, Joe Liberal really understands what we want for our kids, and he is really committed to helping us achieve our goals as a community,” Carol Danvers said.</p>
Final word	<p><i>Joe Liberal described the cuts at the school as a step backward, but stressed that Ontario Liberals will stand up for families in their community.</i></p> <p><i>“Doug Ford’s Conservative government’s priorities are all out of whack. They’ve hired a special advisor for alcohol and are obsessed with putting booze in corner stores, but they’re cutting services that are supposed to give our kids the best possible start,” said Hunter. “We’re going to continue to stand up for public services like education that Ontario families depend on.”</i></p>
Newspaper mark to indicate the end of a release	—30—
Contact	Contact: Joe Liberal joeliberaletbicokecentrepla@gmail.com 416-555-5555

C. Sharing your release with the media

Help them out

Reporters are busy. They compete more than ever before to get the attention of their audience, with smaller and smaller teams to work with. Make their lives easier. We recommend sharing the news release with them in an attachment and in the body of the email (the fewer clicks, the better!).

Stick to the basics

Stick to the basics of the news, and leave out anything in the release that isn't newsworthy. Anything extra will just add content to your release that the reporter won't cover—and in the worst case scenario, they won't read it at all because it's too long.

Give them a quote

Be sure that you include a quote that contains the key message you're trying to communicate—because media will almost always include this so that they get your perspective. Put this quote near the top.

Provide a photo

Especially when dealing with smaller papers who may not be able to send their own photographer, try to send high quality photos to the reporter you're dealing with that they can include with their story. They'll appreciate the help, and the story will look much better if it gets published.

D. Following up

Relationships still matter—especially when it comes to journalists. Be polite, say thank you, and say thank you again. It costs you nothing, and can go a long ways towards getting your content in print and online down the road.