

Talking Points for MPP Visits

MPP Name: _____ Riding: _____

Name of OPSEU member visiting MPP: _____

Name of person coordinating lobbying efforts: _____

Please create your talking points in the spaces below ahead of time. These talking points and questions will help guide your discussion with your MPP. **Have a pad of paper and pen handy to take notes at the meeting.**

Four key talking points for conservation officers

This is the scope of our work:

- We are critical, front-line peace officers with Ontario Police College training.
- We enforce all laws related to natural resources, and public safety laws including the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and the Reopening Ontario Act.
- We conduct enforcement patrols, investigate crime scenes including firearm injuries and human fatalities, execute search warrants, collect forensic evidence, lay charges, carry out high-risk arrests, search-and-seizures, undercover operations and testifying in court.
- We are the only OPS employees to carry side-arms due to the danger inherent in the job – every poacher we catch is usually armed with a gun or a knife.
- We are often the nearest front-line law enforcement officer for rural communities.

We get paid a lot less than comparable positions inside and outside the OPS:

- Conservation officers get paid much less than most enforcement officers, inspectors and investigators in other ministries despite similar job duties and often more complex and high-risk work – the difference is as high as \$16,000 per year.
- We get paid up to \$31,000 less than OPP officers despite similar training and duties.

The consequences of inadequate compensation:

- Low pay is causing low morale among conservation officers. We feel undervalued and ignored.
- Experienced conservation officers are leaving MNR for other careers that pay better, and many highly-qualified candidates never apply.

Community support for more conservation officers and fair compensation:

- The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), which represents 100,000 members, have called for hiring more conservation officers and for fair pay to retain experienced officers. (Source: <https://www.ofah.org/insider/2021/03/shortage-of-conservation-officers-threatens-our-natural-resources/>)
- During the 2018 election, the current government promised to hire more officers, but they haven't done so yet. Low pay for conservation officers will not help them keep that promise.

Introduce yourself and the work you do.

1. **My name is** _____ **. I live in your riding.**

I'm here as an OPSEU/SEFPO member, and I'd like to talk to you about fair compensation for conservation officers. We want the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to grant our request for reclassification and increased pay for conservation officers. But they have denied our requests for decades.

2. **This is how unfair wages affect my colleagues and me:**

[Fill out ahead of time with a personal story. Talk here about what you do at work, and how being paid unfairly makes you feel. If you've seen colleagues leave for higher-paying jobs, share that story.]

Can we count on your support?

3. Ask MPP: **What is your position on this issue?** [Write down MPP's response here]

4. Ask MPP: **These are the actions I am asking you to take on this issue. Will you commit to taking these specific actions on the issue?**

[Fill out ahead of time: List the concrete actions you want them to take here.]

- _____ YES NO
- _____ YES NO
- _____ YES NO

5. Ask MPP: **What action are you going to take on this issue?**

[Write down MPP's response here] _____

List specific commitments made by MPP if different than above:

- _____
- _____

“Thank you for taking time to discuss this issue with me.”

NOTE: After the meeting, debrief with your group. Then visit opseu.org/cold/lobby-report-back and fill out the survey to let OPSEU/SEFPO know how your meeting went!