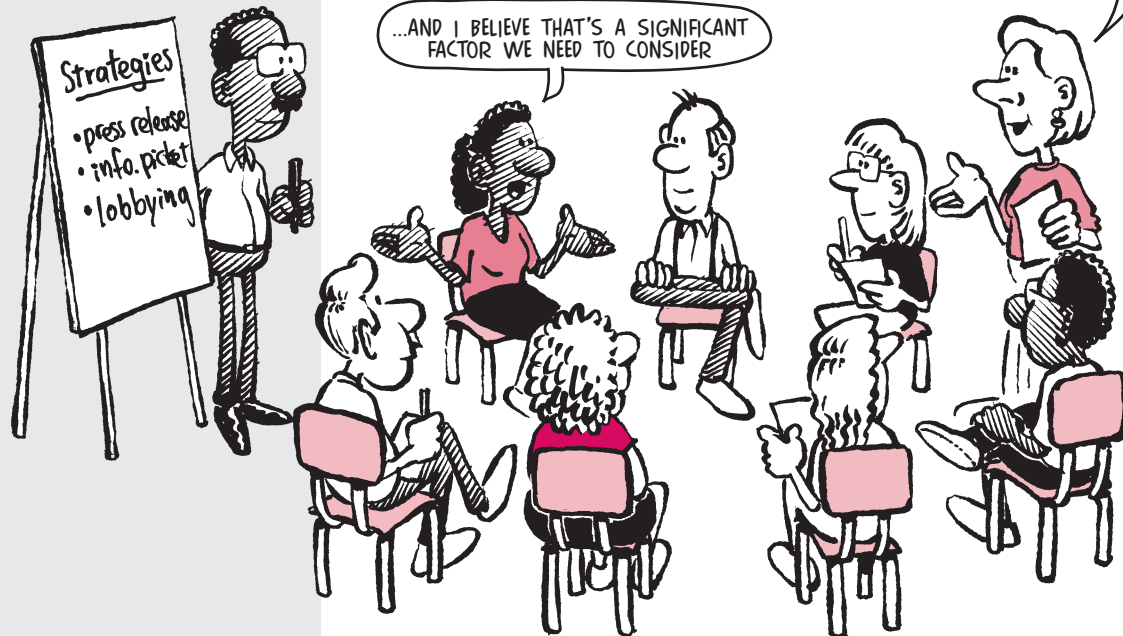


# G*roup participation*



If you want to do great work as a chapter of The Council of Canadians, you must have a chapter whose members work well as a group. While most of your energy and time will be spent trying to make campaign actions a success, it is important to spend some time focused on the group itself. You need a strong, solid, well-run group if you want strong, solid, well-run campaigns.

In any group, different members will take on different roles. Some members are outspoken, some are quiet. Some enjoy taking on several tasks at once, others only take on small pieces of work. Remember the Skills Bingo game (page 7)? Don't forget to put all the different skills of group members to use. It takes many people working together to make change.

A good group facilitator is someone who can bring out the best in the group members. This can only happen if all of the members are appreciated for their unique sets of experience, knowledge and skills. A good facilitator knows that people who are appreciated are more likely to contribute. The more people who contribute, the easier the workload for all. To feel appreciated, people must be heard, respected and trusted to do the tasks that they take on.

## **TIP** The sign of a good facilitator

A good group facilitator is someone who can bring out the best in the group members. He or she knows that people who are appreciated are more likely to contribute. And the more people who contribute, the easier the workload for all.

## Facilitating meetings

Facilitation of meetings does not have to rely on one person alone. Many groups rotate the role of facilitator (or chair) from meeting to meeting.

That way, different people can develop their facilitation skills and not all of the responsibility for meetings falls onto the shoulders of one person. Good facilitation takes practice, but here are some general pointers:

## Providing space for people to speak

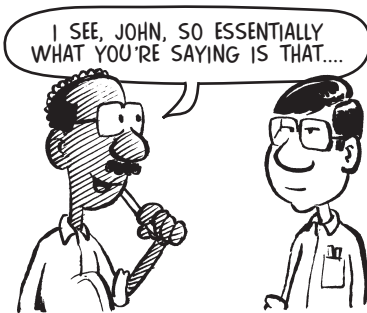
Be sure to provide the “space” for all group members to speak during the meeting. If some people have not spoken during a discussion, a facilitator can say something like, “I’d like to give an opportunity to those who haven’t yet spoken to say something if they would like to.” If everyone wants to speak at once, the facilitator can keep a speakers’ list to make sure no one speaks out of turn.

## Recording the points

If it is important to record the points that are being made in the meeting, be sure that someone other than the facilitator is taking notes. If it is important to the discussion that people understand the main points being made, they can be recorded on flip chart paper for all to see.

## Active listening

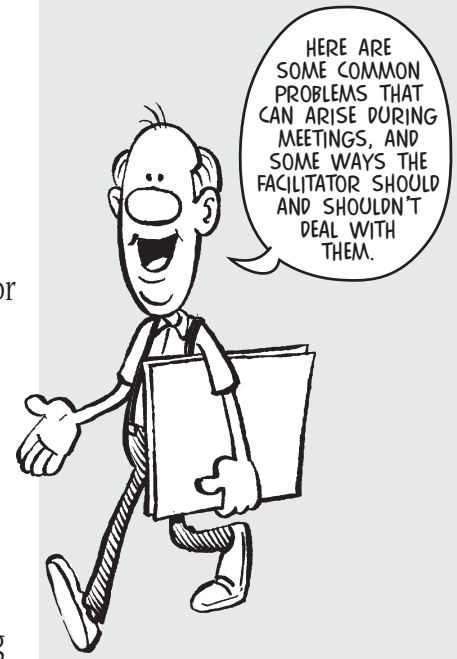
A good facilitator must know how to “actively listen.” You can show that you are actively listening in a number of ways: by focusing on the speaker when (s)he is speaking; by rephrasing what the speaker has just said; by summarizing the main points that were made in a discussion.






When the facilitator is a good listener, (s)he encourages all members of the group to listen actively to each other.

## Respecting the agenda

A good facilitator respects the agenda. If the meeting is running late, the facilitator should ask the group what they want to do about it.



<b>Tips for effective facilitation</b> (Adapted from the <i>Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making</i> )		
 <b>The problem</b>	 <b>Less effective responses</b>	 <b>More effective responses</b>
<b>A highly verbal member is dominating the group.</b>	Try to control this person, or point out they are taking up everyone's time.	Encourage everyone else to participate.
<b>The group is goofing around.</b>	Try to "organize" people.	Take a break as soon as possible—people are overloaded or worn out.
<b>A few people are goofing around.</b>	Ignore the behaviour.	In a kind, light-hearted way, ask for decorum.
<b>The group is generally not participating much.</b>	Assume silence means consent.	Switch to another method of generating ideas which encourages participation, such as small-group work.
<b>Some people remain silent.</b>	Put a quiet person on the spot by asking for his/her opinion.	Ask, generally, for opinions from people who haven't spoken or break into small groups.
<b>People are locking horns.</b>	Spend time in the meeting trying to resolve the conflict.	Ask other group members for opinions on the issue being discussed—don't focus on the dominant minority.
<b>People are quibbling about trivial matters.</b>	Lecture the group about wasting time.	Have the group step back from the issue and talk about the process.
<b>Someone becomes strident.</b>	Confront the person during a break.	People repeat themselves because they don't think they're being understood. Summarize the person's statement to be sure you understand and to let him/her know he/she is being heard.
<b>People aren't following through very well on assigned tasks.</b>	Ignore the problem or give most of the responsibility to a few people.	Have people work in teams on tasks. Ask people to report back on the task before it is finished, which gives them an opportunity to ask for help.