

Making a Deputation

What is a deputation?

A deputation is a formal written or verbal presentation to make your views known to your municipal government. Municipal council's provide opportunities for citizens, community groups, and agencies to present deputations.

Why does the county do this?

Deputations are one way for municipal politicians to listen to those who elected them. In this way, municipal governments demonstrate that they are open and accessible to the views of their citizens.

Where are they presented?

Deputations are made in front of either the committee of the whole, or standing committees. Municipal councils in Haldimand and Norfolk do not have standing committees. All deputations are delivered to council as a whole. Written deputations may also be submitted. If you cannot be present, a written deputation will be submitted into the record. For more information about how and where to present your deputation, contact each of the counties [Haldimand County's](#) and [Norfolk County's](#)

Why make a deputation?

A deputation is a great way to educate your municipal councillor about your issue and to get your message out publicly. Your point of view becomes a matter of public record. And it's one way of exercising your rights as a citizen and assuming responsibility for creating a quality community. Making a deputation allows you to speak to a group of politicians at one time and to ask and answer questions. The media are also often present.

When can you make a deputation?

You can only give a deputation if a council has "opened the floor" to it. This means allowing community members to present their views and opinions on the issue(s) in front of the committee. This usually happens when policy and funding directions are being introduced or reviewed. Deputations are usually heard at the beginning of each agenda item at municipal meetings, but councillors may also decide to hear deputations at specific times during their meetings.

How to arrange to speak

- Monitor the committee in question so that you know when the time for deputations is scheduled. There are a number of ways to do this: you can check the municipal websites [Haldimand County](#) and [Norfolk County](#), or, better yet, get to know a friendly councillor or the County Clerk. They often will let you know in advance if they think you should speak to an agenda item.
- Call the County Clerk. He or she will put you on the list to address the committee.
- Ask when, and for how long, you can speak; it will usually be only 5 minutes. If you have more than two people speaking, they can share this time or you can request two back-to-back spots. Organize your presentation so that each speaker covers a topic or a portion of a topic. They will allow more time if the speakers are not repetitive.

- If you are a staff member at an agency, it can be helpful to have a client/service user speak as well.
- Ask who else is addressing the committee,
- Decide who is best to give the deputation from your organization—usually, the politicians want to hear from a constituent (user of a service or member of an organization), but sometimes hearing from the chair or executive director of an organization is fine too.
- Bring your own translator with you.

Preparing your deputation

- Write out what you want to say—see the sample structure below.
- Make your deputation as personal as possible. Explain how the policy will affect you, your family, and your community.
- If you are a user of a service that the policy addresses, explain what benefits you have gained from the policy-supported services, and how the community would suffer if the policy changed.
- Deputations that use statistics to help make a point are good, but only use a few and be prepared to back up the statistic if asked to by a councillor.
- Practise reading or saying your piece out loud beforehand. Time yourself, to be sure you are under the time limit! If you are close to the time, you will feel the pressure to rush. Better to keep it short.
- Anticipate some questions you may be asked and prepare answers.
- Submit your presentation to the clerk as early as possible for distribution to the councillors. During your speech use phrases such as “I know you have read the material, but I want to highlight this...” This gives them credit for doing their homework.
- Have a number of written copies of your presentation to distribute at the committee.

Preparing to go to City Hall

Depending upon the agenda, you may have a lengthy wait. Be prepared. It may be useful to get an estimated time for when you will be presenting your deputation. Invite others to go with you to show wider community support and to be a support to you. Sometimes, a few people will go up to the table to sit beside or stand behind the person presenting the deputation.

On the day of your deputation

- Be yourself. Know that what you have to say is important.
- When you arrive in the room you should be able to get a copy of the deputation list. If this information isn't on one of the side tables, ask the clerk. This list will tell you the order of the speakers and what issues they are there to speak on.
- Be sure to keep to your time limit—councillors will cut you off when your time is up.
- Speak slowly and into the microphone so that you can be understood.
- If there isn't an assigned time, you should arrive at the beginning of the meeting.
- Be prepared that there may be a lengthy wait.
- Smile and be friendly! Don't be afraid. Councillors want to hear what you have to say.
- Be assertive but not aggressive. Stop if they are not paying attention, smile when they start to pay attention and continue. This will not be discounted from your time.

Tips for being most effective

- If you are willing to help county council lobby the provincial or federal governments to get more money for cities and municipalities, let them know! (And then follow up by writing a letter to your MPP and MP.)
- Call your local councillor and tell her or him that you will be making a deputation. Ask your councillor to come to the meeting to hear you.
- Make sure you send your local councillor a copy of your deputation.

The Deputation: What to Cover

- Be sure to double-space your text and to use a clear, easy-to read-font. Number your pages.
- Include the date and committee name (for tracking purposes).
- Address the committee. For example: “Good afternoon, Madam Chair. Before I start, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address the committee.” OR “I would like to thank members of the standing committee for this opportunity to speak before you on this very important issue.”
- Thank the committee for allowing you to come before them.
- Introduce yourself and your organization, but keep it brief.
- Clearly state the issue you are addressing. Be very clear about what you are asking of council. (i.e. Don’t raise HSR rates. Provide single mother’s with recreation centre passes.)
- Tell them why it is important.
- Give examples of the problem and / or solution.
- Tell them what you want them to do and when.
- Tell them—again—why it is important.
- They may ask questions but don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know,” “Although I am not an expert, in my experience...”
- Thank them and tell them you will be watching and waiting!
- Have fun!

Adapted from City for All Women Initiative, Women’s Civic Participation Kit Found at: http://www.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/B16EDBCA-C9D6-4D1B-BCE3-78E28CE59359/0/Status_WomensCPKit.pdf