



How to Have Effective Conversations about the Election

One-to-one conversations are the most effective way to engage people and help to persuade or broaden someone's understanding. Conversations help to build meaningful connections that assist and deepen our capacity to mobilize others.

During conversations it is important to listen to concerns and opinions of others to help find common ground and understand where people stand on issues of importance. Through listening you have a frame to understand where someone is at and this frame can help to bring along someone's consciousness and view.

As we approach the June 2022 provincial election in Ontario, it is vital that members have conversations about election issues to engage co-workers, parents, friends, and families about the importance of voting. Every conversation presents an opportunity to emphasize the importance of electing a government that will support and protect publicly funded public education. Wherever this conversation happens, there are techniques you can use to ensure it is constructive and you are persuasive.

Effective conversations can happen anywhere: in the workplace with colleagues, with family and friends, at places of worship, community groups and social clubs, and at social gatherings.

Principles of Holding Effective Conversations

- Avoid distractions. This means putting your phone away. Be sure to pay full attention to the other person while you are speaking with them and give them your full attention.
- Do not interrupt. This lets the other person know they are being heard. If you feel the need to counter the argument or judge their position out loud, keep listening instead.
- Listening is key. Remember that you are there to listen and make the person you are speaking with feel heard. People often feel ignored and want to be heard. By listening, we can learn what the person's issue is, and speak about it.
- Learn from others. Conversations with others help us to learn from each other and from diverse communities. Most people are not one-issue voters and they have things to say. Take the time to hear it.
- When you speak, avoid leading questions like "Don't you agree that..." in favour of positive statements about what's needed for strong public education in Ontario, for instance: "For students to learn well, they need safer schools."

How to Have Effective Conversations about Electoral Politics

There is a flow to conversations, and the following steps will help you to broach the topic of elections. When you approach a conversation with the framework below in mind, it will be easier to advocate effectively for the need to elect an Ontario government that will support public education.

1. **Listen.** A good rule to follow is to listen 80 per cent of the time and speak 20 per cent of the time. This ensures the other person knows we are engaged with them throughout the conversation.
2. As you listen, **identify the issues** important to the person you are speaking with and look for common ground. You can use the common ground as an opening for you to talk about education issues.

3. When you have found the issue where you have common ground, affirm it with something like: "I agree with you that..." then move on to speaking about **why we need a government that believes in strong public education**.
4. **State the victories** that have been achieved on the issues of importance you identified as you were listening to the conversation.
5. **Mention the urgency**, that over the time of the pandemic, or years, we keep seeing how public education has been attacked and that we need to come together.
6. **Make a direct ask:** Make a clear and concrete ask such as "will you join me in an action/ signing a pledge/coming to a meeting." Wait for their response.
7. **Be honest** about the challenges and the real fight for public education in this province.
8. Remind the person that their **efforts are needed to make a difference** in the province.

If you are putting together a group to canvass or holding a meeting on political issues, there are two more steps:

9. **Confirm** their contact information so that you can get in touch with them again, if they are not someone you already know.
10. **Plan** a follow-up to discuss further.

With these tips in mind, you can be part of effective conversations and effective organizing that works to mobilize ETFO members and your neighbours to vote in the June 2022 provincial election.

For further information please contact ETFO by calling 416-962-3836, or toll free 1-888-838-3836 and ask to speak to the organizing team, or email organizers@etfo.org.