



# Election Advocacy 101

The writ has been dropped and candidates are lining up to ask for your vote. Elections are ideal opportunities to influence public policy and budget decisions. As a member of Physicians of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Advocacy, we are hoping to raise the profile of issues affecting people with neurodevelopmental disorders. As a professional, you have a voice, and now is a great time to talk about issues that are important to you. There are many ways to express your opinion and concerns. Asking key questions of your local candidates when they knock on your door, or at all candidates meetings doesn't take a lot of time. This toolkit is designed to give you some tips on how to advocate during an election. In case you need some inspiration, we have also provided some ideas of issues that PONDA considers in need of some attention!

## Why advocate during an election?

- An election is an opportunity to show our issues are important to a segment of the population
- Politicians are easier to meet and to build relationships because they want your vote
- Promises are made during election campaigns
- Raising our profile during an election shows we mean business!



## Where are the opportunities for advocacy?

- Follow us on twitter @pondanetwork and retweet/like statements you agree with
- Ask questions at all candidates meetings, held several times in an election in every riding. Typically you will have a minute or so to describe the issue and formulate your question, then each candidate will have a chance to reply. You will then have time for a brief rebuttal. These meetings are often televised, which will broaden the audience.
- Ask for a private meeting with each candidate in your riding to share your concerns and educate them on the issues. Make your concern relevant to your local community. Follow the meeting up with a letter outlining your position.
- Write a letter to each party asking for their position on the issue you care about.
- Submit an opinion editorial or letter to the editor to local or national papers
- If you are really keen, you can host a special event in your riding, and invite supporters, candidates, and media



### **Tips on being an effective advocate during an election**

- Know the issues that are important to you
- Remain non-partisan in your discussions, even if you have already decided who to vote for
- When meeting with candidates, be on time, pay attention to the staff in the office, and bring your card. Start your meeting by finding some common ground. Be prepared to talk about yourself and why you care about this issue.
- Always follow up with a letter, note of appreciation for their time, or other reminder of your meeting.
- If possible, meet the candidates several times to increase your impact
- Be patient

### **KEY issues we think are important**

- Mental health supports for children, youth and adults with developmental disorders
- Adequate funding for children's developmental services: Children's Treatment Centres (including funding for developmental paediatricians), school support services
- Multidisciplinary assessment teams for children and adults with complex developmental/behavioural presentations (FASD, ACE)
- Making integrated rehab services happen!

### **Other resources for political advocacy:**

- OMA Advocacy workshop, available in many locations around the province
- OMA tip sheets:
  - Advocacy Top 4 Things
  - Meeting with your Elected Official, <https://www.oma.org/sections/advocacy/meet-your-mpps/>