

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?

- 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

Social Media Strategies

- Follow us on Twitter @pondanetwork and retweet/like statements you agree with.
- If you are tweeting tag us so we can retweet
- Use hashtags like #ONhealth, #ONpoli or #ONvotes to help others find your tweets.
- If you meet with your local MPP ask for a photo and if you can share it on social media. Thank them publicly by tweeting at them and including their Twitter handle.

KEY issues we think are important

- Increasing family physician capacity for providing care for adults with developmental disabilities
- Mental health supports for children, youth, and adults with developmental disorders
- Increased access to multidisciplinary assessment teams for children and adults with complex developmental/behavioural presentations (e.g. FASD, Adverse Childhood Events (ACE), intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy)
- Reducing wait times for children with Autism waiting to access core clinical services through the Ontario Autism Program
- Access to nursing care for children with complex medical and developmental disorders at home and school Implementing the recommendations of the OHRC Right to Read Inquiry – including language curriculum change in schools

Other resources for political advocacy:

OMA tip sheets:

[Prescription for Ontario – MPP call and meeting tool kit](#)