



THE CANADIAN DENTAL  
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

# CDHA Advocacy Toolkit

A guide for dental hygienists

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### About this toolkit

This toolkit was developed by the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) as a guide to help dental hygienists prepare for and take part in the local advocacy process. While CDHA meets regularly with elected officials and policy makers at the national level, grassroots advocacy efforts are equally important. Municipal and provincial/territorial elected officials are especially interested in hearing the priorities and concerns of their constituents.

As local health care providers, dental hygienists can speak with authority about the oral health issues affecting people in their community every day. When connecting with local government representatives, dental hygienists also have an opportunity to raise awareness of the dental hygiene profession and the importance of access to preventive and therapeutic oral health care for all Canadians.

Readers may use this toolkit with as much or as little adaptation as they choose.

Refer to the last page for tips on finding contact information for your local representatives.

### Start by identifying the issue you want to address

- **Focus on one or two priorities:** Consider what you are most concerned about within your community or province/territory. This is your chance to express your views on key issues such as the connection between oral and overall health, barriers to oral care faced by vulnerable populations (i.e., seniors, children, Indigenous peoples, low-income individuals), substance use, community water fluoridation, oral cancer or something else.
- **Gather some supporting information and facts:** Consider what available information, data or evidence will best support your key messages.
- **CDHA's primary advocacy objective is improved access to preventive oral health care for all Canadians:** Discussing this priority and the critical role of dental hygienists in the local context allows for consistent messaging and a unified voice for dental hygiene across Canada. CDHA has several information and advocacy resources that you can share with representatives. Visit [cdha.ca/advocacy](https://cdha.ca/advocacy) to learn more.

# Contact your local representatives

- **Develop your key messages:** Personal stories are very effective as they resonate powerfully with elected representatives. You can establish the relevance and importance of the issue(s) you have chosen to address by sharing your professional insights and experiences.
- **Send a personalized letter:** Let them know that you are a dental hygienist in their riding and are seeking to share concerns that impacts individuals/families in the community. Use the following template as a starting point for your email or letter. Simply change, remove, add or reorder any key phrases as you think best. Try to keep your letter to one page or less.

**[Date]**

Dear (recipient name),

**[Introduce yourself]** As a constituent of (name of your community) and a (dental hygienist/role), I am reaching out to you to outline the critical role that dental hygienists play in delivering oral care services in the community, and in supporting optimal oral and overall health for Canadians.

**[Describe the issue with supporting information]** Oral health is essential for physical, social, and mental well-being. Poor oral health can cause pain, disrupt eating, sleeping, and growth patterns, ultimately diminishing quality of life, and contribute to serious life-threatening illnesses. Vulnerable groups, such as low-income families and those living in rural and remote communities, have the greatest burden of oral diseases. This is particularly concerning because most oral diseases can be prevented with regular professional dental hygiene services.

**[Inform about the profession]** As essential primary health care providers, dental hygienists are experts in oral health promotion and disease prevention and recognize that good oral health is vital for overall health. Dental hygienists are doing their part to improve the oral health of Canadians through the delivery of oral health services, education, and health promotion. But we need help.

**[State your request for support]**

**[OPTIONAL\* Request a meeting]** I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in the coming weeks to discuss these issues and the positive steps that can be taken to improve the oral and overall health of people in (name your community) and across Canada. Please contact me at (insert phone number and email) should you have any questions and to set up a meeting.

Regards,  
(your name, credentials)

- **Request a brief meeting (OPTIONAL, see template\*):** Keep in mind that elected representatives often have daunting schedules but tend to make more time for people from the ridings they represent. Expect that most representatives may afford you only 15 to 30 minutes.
- **Follow up on your meeting request:** A few days to two weeks after sending your email/letter, call the representative's office to follow up on your request to meet briefly (in person or by video) at their next available opportunity.

## Engage representatives during your conversation/meeting

- **If a meeting is arranged, prepare in advance:** It is important to do your homework before any meeting by reviewing background information about the representative. You can obtain such information by visiting their website and by reading local or provincial news media or by doing a quick internet search of other reputable sources.

If you have planned for one or two dental hygienists to join the meeting with you, identify the principal spokesperson beforehand and ensure that each individual will have an opportunity to participate in the conversation.

- **Be brief and concise:** It is important to capture the representative's interest in the first 30 seconds of your meeting. Introduce yourself: where you live, where you work, and your top priorities for the discussion.
- **Thank the representative for meeting with you and then discuss the key issues:** A good conversation-starter may be to ask how familiar the representative is with the dental hygiene profession. Share the fact that dental hygiene is the sixth largest regulated health profession in the country; you can also provide the number of dental hygienists in your province/territory. Emphasize that dental hygienists are committed to improving access to preventive oral health care for the overall health and well-being of Canadians.
- **If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer:** Explain that you would be happy to find the answers for them following the meeting. This response provides an opportunity for you to follow up with the representative later.
- **Request permission to take a photo:** If photos were taken during the meeting, share them on your social media accounts. Tag the representative(s) and CDHA.

## Follow up after the meeting

- **Make some general notes from your conversation:** Record your impressions and key points from the conversation. Was the representative familiar with oral health issues and/or the dental hygiene profession? Was the representative in support of preventive oral care, particularly for vulnerable populations?
- **Send a note of thanks:** As a starting point, use the following template for your thank you letter.

**[Date]**

Dear (recipient),

I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me on (date). I greatly appreciated the opportunity to share with you the vital role that dental hygienists play in helping to ensure optimal oral and overall health for individuals living in (community name).

**[Recap high points from the conversation]** As discussed during our meeting, (complete).

Once again, thank you for taking the time to meet. I hope that we can communicate further on ways to improve the oral health of Canadians and ensure that oral health care is accessible to those who need it most. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at (insert email address).

Your name, credentials

- **Follow-up with any requests or action items:** Do this as promptly as possible. Should you require any assistance from CDHA, let us know.

## Tip: Finding a representative's contact information

To find the name, email address, social media handle or constituency office of elected representatives at any level of government, consult the following websites.

### • Federal

- House of Commons: [ourcommons.ca](https://ourcommons.ca)
- Federal political parties (i.e., for members of the opposition and critics to government):
  - » Liberal Party of Canada: [liberal.ca](https://liberal.ca)
  - » Conservative Party of Canada: [conservative.ca](https://conservative.ca)
  - » New Democratic Party of Canada: [ndp.ca](https://ndp.ca)

### • Provincial/territorial

- Provincial/territorial legislative assemblies (e.g., Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia)
- Provincial/territorial government websites for select offices (e.g., for elected officials who have additional duties as Cabinet ministers or parliamentary assistants)
- Provincial/territorial political parties (i.e., for members of the opposition and critics to government)

### • Municipal

- Cities, townships, villages, counties or regions typically include contact information for the mayor's office and local councillors on their websites

## Learn more at [cdha.ca/advocacy](https://cdha.ca/advocacy)

For comments or questions, contact Juliana Jackson, manager of policy, research, and government relations, at [jjackson@cdha.ca](mailto:jjackson@cdha.ca) or 1-800-267-5235 ext. 123.



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