



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

# CDHA Advocacy Toolkit



Helping to ensure optimal oral and  
overall health for all Canadians

# CDHA Advocacy Toolkit

It is important to ensure that politicians at all levels and of all political stripes understand the vital role dental hygienists play in helping to ensure optimal oral and overall health for Canadians. While the staff and board of directors of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) meet regularly with elected officials and maintain ongoing relationships with civil servants, successful advocacy depends heavily on local efforts by members to deliver a strong message to their elected representatives on issues affecting their community. To prepare dental hygienists for this advocacy work, CDHA has developed a toolkit with the information required to ensure that discussions with local elected officials succeed in raising awareness of the importance of access to preventive and therapeutic oral health care for Canadians.

## Steps for Successful Advocacy

### 1 Request for/Arrange a Meeting (See Appendix A: Letter Template for Meeting Request)

Arrange a meeting with local representatives to talk about the importance of preventive oral health care and the critical role of dental hygienists. This 15- to 30-minute meeting could also focus on a particular topic that you're concerned about within your community or province, such as vaping, community water fluoridation or oral care of seniors.

Use the letter template (Appendix A) to request a meeting. You can obtain contact and background information on the representative by visiting their website.

#### *After sending the letter:*

- **A few days later:** Call the office to explain that you are a constituent and that you hope to meet in person at the representative's next available opportunity to discuss oral health concerns in the community.
- **Two weeks later:** The local office is likely to contact you within this time period. If not, it is strongly recommended that you telephone the office to request a day and time to meet the representative.

When engaging politicians, it is important to remember that members of Parliament and provincial politicians often have daunting schedules, but tend to make more time for people from the ridings they represent.

### 2 Prepare for the Meeting (See Appendix B: Meeting Guide)

When preparing for a meeting it is important to do your homework. You should always review background information about the elected official you are connecting with beforehand.

#### *For biographical information on current federal officials:*

- Go online at [www.openparliament.ca/politicians/](http://www.openparliament.ca/politicians/).
- In addition, you can contact Juliana Jackson, CDHA manager of policy, research, and government relations, at [jjackson@cdha.ca](mailto:jjackson@cdha.ca) or 1-800-267-5235 ext. 123 for help in locating the information you need to succeed.

It is important that dental hygienists across Canada speak with one voice and deliver consistent messages to elected officials. The overarching message that needs to be conveyed is that investments in preventive oral care are more effective, both financially and clinically, than delivering oral care after disease and other problems arise. You are encouraged to consider which issues are most relevant to people in your community and which issues you're comfortable explaining.

#### *Key messages:*

- Quick and interesting facts on the dental hygiene profession ([www.cdha.ca/DidYouKnowDH](http://www.cdha.ca/DidYouKnowDH))
- [CDHA fact sheets and resources](#)
- [CDHA advocacy resources](#)

Discussing these priorities in the local context is an important strategy for success, and will create a more interesting dialogue between you and your representative. Be sure to bring along materials that can be left behind for elected officials to review and reference at a later time. The meeting guide (Appendix B) outlines the materials to take to the meeting and other pertinent information.

It's normal to be nervous when first meeting your elected official. Remember, you elected them and it's an important part of their job to meet with their constituents. You can also invite a colleague from the same riding to join you for support.

### 3 Engage the Politician During the Meeting

It is important to capture the politician's interest in the first 30 seconds of your interview. Introduce yourself, where you live, where you work, and what your top priority is for the discussion. Stories are very effective. This is your elevator pitch. Use the meeting guide to ensure you make the most of your 15 to 30 minutes (Appendix B).

*If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer:*

- Explain that you would be happy to get the answers for them following the meeting.
- This response provides an opportunity for you to follow up with the elected official later; CDHA can help you locate the necessary information.

Finally, at the conclusion of the meeting, don't forget to ask the official for a photo that you can share on social media.

### 4 Follow Up After the Meeting (See Appendix C: Meeting Debrief Form and Appendix D: Follow-up Thank You Letter)

Following your meeting, it is important to write down everything that was discussed. Please complete the meeting debrief form and share it with CDHA staff for ongoing record keeping and relationship building (Appendix C). Achieving advocacy goals requires strong relationship building and maintaining open dialogue with elected officials. For this reason, it is important to send a letter of thanks to the politician for taking the time to meet with you, hear your concerns, and discuss solutions. Use the letter template as a guide (Appendix D).

*If you took a photo at the end of the meeting:*

- Share it on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) where politicians are very active.
- You can find politicians' Facebook pages by searching their names in the Facebook search toolbar.
- You can find their Twitter handles at <http://politwitter.ca/>.

Finally, if the elected official requires any additional information or support in writing a letter to a cabinet minister, it is critical to provide them with that support.

## Contact CDHA

Additional resources can be found on CDHA's website ([www.cdha.ca/advocacy](http://www.cdha.ca/advocacy)).

For more information, please 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.

# APPENDIX A

## Letter Template for Meeting Request

{insert date}

{insert address}

Dear {insert name}:

As a constituent of {your riding name} and a {dental hygienist/insert role} serving your community, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the vital role that dental hygienists, members of the sixth largest registered health profession in Canada, play in ensuring optimal oral and overall health for Canadians.

I would like to meet with you to discuss the oral health issues affecting individuals living in your constituency. Oral health is essential for overall wellness and it is an integral part of physical, social, and mental well-being. Poor oral health can cause pain, diminish quality of life, and contribute to serious life-threatening illnesses. Oral diseases are often chronic, painful, and disfiguring, and can disrupt eating, sleeping, and growth patterns, which ultimately diminishes quality of life. In addition, over two (2) million school days and four (4) million working days are lost every year due to dental visits or dental sick days. Vulnerable groups, such as low-income families and those living in rural and remote communities, carry the greatest burden of oral diseases. This is particularly concerning because most oral diseases can be prevented by daily home oral care and professional dental hygiene services.

I would greatly 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 our riding and across Canada. Please contact me at {insert phone number and email} should you have any questions and to set up a meeting.

Sincerely,

{name}

{address}

# APPENDIX B

## Meeting Guide

1. Develop your **elevator pitch**. Most government representatives will afford you only 15 to 30 minutes, so your message should be brief and concise.
2. Determine **which issues you would like to discuss** and bring along the necessary materials to support your messages. These may include:
  - a. Refer to links and resources on page 2
  - b. Any additional background materials relevant to the issues
  - c. Photos (be sure to obtain consent if you wish to share images of clients)
  - d. Your contact information (business cards, if available)

You may wish to prepare folders containing all of the materials for everyone attending the meeting, including yourself. It is wise to bring a few extra folders in case additional staff attend.

3. If there is more than one dental hygienist participating in the meeting, **identify the principal spokesperson** before starting your meeting. Ensure that each individual has an opportunity to speak to one of the topics; all individuals should feel free to comment at any time.
4. Open your meeting by **thanking the representative** for having taken the time from his or her busy schedule to meet with you and discuss these important issues.
5. Introduce yourself by giving your name, title, and profession. Begin by **asking how familiar they are with the profession**. Explain that there are more than 29,000 dental hygienists across Canada, making it the sixth largest registered health profession in the country. Dental hygienists are committed to improving access to oral health care for the overall health and well-being of Canadians. You can also add the number of dental hygienists in your province.
6. Describe the **purpose and objectives** of your meeting:
  - a. To improve the oral health of all Canadians, especially underserved groups
  - b. To educate and inform about the importance of oral health and its impact on overall health (with a focus on the area of interest to you as an individual or group of professionals)
  - c. To optimize existing resources to better meet the needs of Canadians and governments
7. Share personal stories. They can be very receptive to information that resonates with them and with residents in their constituency.

Briefly summarize the key points on the issue(s) you are raising using the one-page briefing notes. Make sure to add that he or she may personally contact you or Ondina Love, CDHA chief executive officer, at [olove@cdha.ca](mailto:olove@cdha.ca), for additional information or clarification.



# APPENDIX D

## Follow-Up Thank You Letter

{insert date}

{insert address}

Dear {insert name}:

I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me on {insert 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 your constituency.

As discussed during our meeting, {personal letter with information on your discussion topics}.

Once again, I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet. I am confident that we can achieve sustainable and equitable access to oral health care by optimizing existing resources. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at {insert phone number and email}.

Sincerely,

{name}

{address}



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