



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

CDHA Advocacy Toolkit

2021 Federal Election Edition

It's time to
support seniors'
oral health



CDHA Advocacy Toolkit—2021 Federal Election Edition

Politicians at all levels and of all political stripes need to understand the vital role dental hygienists play in helping to ensure optimal oral and overall health for Canadians. Federal elections offer a special opportunity to shape the government's health agenda over the years to come as candidates could become members of Cabinet or influential committees that make major policy decisions.

While the staff and board of directors of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) meet regularly with elected officials and maintain ongoing relationships with public servants, advocacy at the local level is equally significant. During an election campaign, candidates are especially interested in hearing the priorities of the people who live in their ridings. CDHA has developed this toolkit to guide dental hygienists through the local advocacy process with focused messaging about oral health and the dental hygiene profession. Readers may use it with as much or as little adaptation as they choose.

Send a personalized email to your local candidates

Send an email to the candidates in your riding about the need to support oral health in this election.

CDHA has prepared messaging that you can quickly use to send a personalized email. When you enter your address into the online template, the names of local federal candidates in your riding will appear. [Click here](#) to deliver your message.

You may wish to request a brief meeting to talk about the importance of preventive oral health care and the critical role of dental hygienists.

- A few days after sending your email, call the candidate's office to explain that you live in the riding and that you hope to meet briefly (in person or by video) at the candidate's next available opportunity. Keep in mind that candidates often have daunting schedules but tend to make more time for people from the ridings they represent. Let them know that you are a dental hygienist in their riding and are seeking to share concerns that impact voters in the community.
- If arranged, a short meeting should focus on one or two election priorities. If time permits, you could also speak to a topic that you are concerned about within your community or province, such as vaping or community water fluoridation.

Prepare for conversations and/or meetings with candidates

When preparing for a meeting or conversation, it is important to do your homework by reviewing background information about your local candidates.

You should also determine which issues are most relevant to your community and what you are comfortable discussing.

- Develop your elevator pitch about the importance of oral health for overall health, for all Canadians and especially vulnerable groups.
- Personal stories are very effective. Candidates can be very receptive to information that resonates with them and with residents in their ridings.
- If there is more than one dental hygienist participating in the meeting, identify the principal spokesperson beforehand and ensure that each individual will have an opportunity to participate in the conversation.

It is normal to be nervous when first meeting a politician or candidate. Just remember that it is 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.

CDHA has several information and advocacy resources that you can share with candidates.

It is important that dental hygienists across Canada speak with one voice and deliver consistent messaging.

- Registered dental hygienists in Canada (www.cdha.ca/DidYouKnowDH)
- CDHA 2021 federal election brief (www.cdha.ca/electionbrief)
- Preventive oral care for seniors (www.cdha.ca/seniors)
- National standards for long-term care facilities (www.cdha.ca/nationalstandards)

These resources communicate CDHA priorities for preventive oral care for the upcoming federal election, namely the oral health of seniors and low-income Canadians. CDHA's objective is to ensure that oral care can be accessed easily by those who need it most. Discussing these priorities in the local context is a key strategy for success and will create a more interesting dialogue between you and your local candidates.

Engage candidates during your conversations/meetings

It is important to capture the candidate's interest in the first 30 seconds of your meeting. Most candidates may afford you only 15 to 30 minutes, so plan to be brief and concise.

- Introduce yourself, where you live, where you work, and your top priorities for the discussion.
- Thank the candidate for having taken the time to meet with you and then discuss these important issues.
- A good conversation-starter may be to ask how familiar the candidate 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 share the number of dental hygienists in your province). Emphasize that dental hygienists are committed to improving access to 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 candidate later; CDHA can help you locate the necessary information.
- Don't forget to ask the candidate for a photo that you can share on social media.

Follow up with candidates

Successful advocacy requires strong relationship building and maintaining open dialogue with elected officials. Was the candidate familiar with oral care issues? Was the candidate supportive of policy changes to promote preventive oral care, particularly for vulnerable populations? Make some general notes from your conversation.

- If photos were taken during the meeting, share them on your social media accounts. Tag the candidate(s) and CDHA.
- Send a note of thanks to the candidate for taking the time to meet with you. As a guide, consider the following:

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 (riding name). As discussed during our meeting, (customize/complete based on the conversation). Once again, thank you for taking the time to meet. I hope that, if you are elected this fall, we can communicate further on improving the oral health of Canadians and ensuring 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 phone number and email).

- Finally, if the candidate requested any additional information or support, follow up promptly. Should you require any assistance from CDHA, let us know.

To find a candidate's social media handles, visit their political party's website for details.

Contact CDHA

Additional resources can be found on CDHA's website www.cdha.ca/advocacy.

For more information, please contact Juliana Jackson, manager of policy, research, and government relations, at jjackson@cdha.ca or 1-800-267-5235 ext. 123.



THE CANADIAN DENTAL
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION

L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

www.cdha.ca