

## Best Practices for Successfully Engaging with Elected Candidates

It is important to strategize your outreach to elected candidates to improve your chances of making a genuine connection. The following best practices can help guide you to successfully engage with them.

### Communications

#### Guidance for Local Advocacy

**Emphasize your position as a constituent** – Elected candidates are always more eager to hear from people who are likely to vote for them in their ridings. Their primary job as elected officials is to listen to your concerns and address them. Make sure to contextualize your advocacy as a member of the local community, and the role you play within it.

**Build positive relationships** - It is always beneficial to foster long-term relationships with political stakeholders so that they can advocate for your needs. Building amicable relationships with politicians over time is crucial, as it fosters trust and lends credibility to your advocacy. As with everyone else, politicians value the opinions of those they trust, and frequent communication is key to gaining that trust.

**Get personal** - Do not be afraid to share your personal experiences through your dermatological work and that of your loved ones and patients (broadly) when you contact candidates. The effectiveness of local advocacy is most prominent when you humanize large and pressing issues into stories that resonate with candidates. While numbers and statistics are important, elected candidates are more likely to connect to hearing a story about how someone in their riding experiences hardships in the health system. Ultimately these are issues affecting you and your community, so it is best to speak from that position.

#### Guidance for Dermatologists

Dermatologists as medical professionals are respected members of the community with a degree of credibility and play an integral role in promoting the health and well-being of people within a community. The close ties dermatologists have with their local communities can significantly impact the lives of residents. By speaking on certain issues and highlighting them to elected candidates, your knowledge and experiences are more likely to resonate with them due to your subject matter expertise.

Remember to remain polite and amicable throughout these interactions and view this as an opportunity to foster a long-term relationship with your elected candidate.

## **Local Advocacy Tactics**

### **Write an op-ed/letter to the editor for your local newspaper**

- You can begin by finding your local community newspaper [here](#).
- On the website of your local newspaper, there will usually be an 'Opinion' or 'Letters to the Editor' section. Click on that tab and explore the page until you find the option to submit your own letter or send in your opinion piece.
- If the aforementioned tabs are not available, you can always click on the 'Contact Us' tab or scroll to the bottom of the web page to find the email address of the editor or the newspaper's general contact email to send in your op-ed. You can also use this contact to follow up on an op-ed or letter to the editor you submitted but have yet to hear back about.

### **Contact your local radio channel**

- You can find your local radio stations [here](#). You can also directly reach out to [CBC Radio/Radio Canada](#) as they are available nationally.
- By exploring the web pages of your local radio station, you will be able to find a 'Contact Us' tab which will have an email address, phone number or submission form where you can submit your thoughts. CBC Radio, for example, has a chatbot embedded into the website which will guide you through the process of submitting a story.
- For avid listeners of local radio, you may be aware of call-in sessions where listeners are encouraged to phone a number and get the opportunity to talk about local issues concerning them. If you happen to be listening to the station during such sessions, it would be a good idea to call in yourself and share your thoughts about health care and the election with your community.

### **Attend or organize a community event and offer an elected candidate the opportunity to meet community members**

- Elected candidates are looking for all kinds of ways to connect with voters, so facilitating such an opportunity gives you the chance to directly engage with elected candidates on your issues.
- During an event, you have the opportunity to directly ask your elected candidate about your concerns and gently push for some kind of commitment. Be sure to communicate the purpose of the event to your elected candidates in advance via their emails or their constituency office in order to make them feel prepared.

### **Write a post on social media platforms calling for action and tagging your elected candidate. Make sure to share it in local neighbourhood Facebook groups!**

- In many smaller communities, it is increasingly rare to find functioning local media outlets. In other cases, the local media is too overwhelmed with more pressing matters and may not respond to your requests to publish an op-ed. This is when connecting with your community online is most effective.

- As always, keep the post polite and succinct, and avoid any partisan politics to ensure that the users reading the post engage with the actual message instead of igniting a distracting debate in the comment section.

**Search for local coalitions and groups advocating for health issues, and seek to participate in their efforts**