



2018 Election Toolkit

A Brief Guide for OCC Members to Inform Candidates of
Caregiver Priorities

May 2018

Election Toolkit

On April 23, 2018, OCC participated in an Election Forum, sponsored by **AdvantAge Ontario – Advancing Senior Care in Ontario**. The event included the participation of panelists representing all 4 political parties. Denyse Lynch, an OCC member, was invited to present the opening remarks which included the following comment:

“From 18 years as caregiver and now, a senior, I am impatient for quality improvements [in health care]. From my consulting experiences, ‘improving our health care system’ is a MASSIVE, Multi-Faceted, Change Management Project. For those stakeholders charged with leading, planning and implementing improvements, it is complex, confusing, messy and scary. Yet to achieve quality ‘requires’ we go through it.

It is **definitely not** for the faint of heart. Improvements need **all stakeholders** - providers, organizations, associations, politicians, funders, and policy developers to be involved. Equally, patients and caregivers also must be engaged. Their years of system-wide experiences with the gaps, barriers and obstacles pinpoint the key areas where improvements are required across the system.”

June 7, 2018 is your opportunity to be engaged by voting for a candidate/party whom you believe best understands caregiver needs and how the system can be improved to respond to these needs.

This toolkit is designed to provide you with some information and simple tips to help you engage with local candidates in advance of the election and **to inform them of OCC priorities**.

More importantly, it will help you **to ask the right questions** to find out where they stand.

Step 1—Identify and Find Out More About Your Local Candidates

To confirm the electoral district in which you will be casting your vote, go to the following link:

<https://voterinformationservice.elections.on.ca/en/election/search>

To find the names of candidates who are running in your area, go to this link:

<https://www4.elections.on.ca/internetapp/nominationcontests.aspx>

Visit the websites of your local candidates' parties and get their contact information. Take a look at the party platforms.

Now you know *who* you may want to speak with!

Step 2 – Decide What you Want to Tell and/or Ask the Candidates

What are OCC's Priorities?

In OCC's **2018 Pre-Budget Submission** and in the **In-Depth Brief** submitted to all political parties, both of which are posted on the OCC website at www.ontariocaregivercoalition.ca , we identified two clear priorities:

The Need for More Flexible Caregiver Respite

It is clear that in order to continue to care for people in their own homes, unpaid family caregivers need to be able to care for their own health and well-being, in

order to sustain their capacity in the caregiver role. Without adequate respite options that meet the unique needs of the caregiver, the pressures on a long term care system that is already stretched, with lengthy wait lists, will be even more severe.

Questions you could ask related to this priority:

1. How does your party intend to make flexible respite options more accessible and affordable for caregivers?
2. Does your party recognize the difficulty some caregivers have in sustaining employment when their caregiving responsibilities interfere with their jobs? How do you plan to address this?
3. What measures will you take to address the shortage in some areas of trained and available respite-care providers (usually personal support workers)?

The Need to Alleviate Financial Distress

Unpaid caregivers are often in jeopardy financially as well as emotionally and physically. By far the most viewed page on the OCC website is the one that describes a monthly caregiver benefit that is available in Nova Scotia. In just one month (March 2018), there were 2,058 views of that page. Most email enquiries that are sent to OCC by caregivers are seeking advice about how to get relief of the financial distress they are experiencing related to caregiving.

Questions you could ask related to this priority:

1. The current Ontario Caregiver Tax Credit is **non-refundable** so it does not benefit those who are low-income. Will your party consider making this a refundable tax credit? If not, why?
2. Will your party consider adopting a monthly caregiver benefit that is like the model used in Nova Scotia so that caregivers can continue providing care in the community, thereby saving the province money that would otherwise be spent on long term care beds?

3. What is your party's position on recommendations made in the report *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change?* What steps do you think need to be taken to reduce the number of people living below the poverty line in Ontario?

https://files.ontario.ca/income_security_-_a_roadmap_for_change-english-accessible_updated.pdf

Step 3- Get Engaged!

Here are a few ways you can get involved this election:

- *Attend a town hall** to listen to candidates and ask questions related to caregiving
- *Write a letter** to the candidate (Tip – a handwritten letter gets attention because it is so old-school!) or send an email
- *Share the story of your experience** as a caregiver – this can be powerful

Step 4 - Vote on June 7th!