

## Self Advocacy Toolkit: Long-Term Care

The purpose of the Long-Term Care (LTC) Self-Advocacy Toolkit is to provide people in long-term care, their care partners, and their supporters with information to assist in advocacy efforts with elected officials. These materials may be used to engage with and educate your local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) on current issues surrounding long-term care and your own personal experiences. Making connections with your local MPP is an indispensable method of effecting change.

Below are tips and advice for reaching out to your MPP regarding the right of residents to welcome care partners into their home. There are three sections as follows:

1. Getting in touch with you MPP
2. Meeting with your MPP
3. Post-meeting follow-up

### Getting in Touch with Your MPP

When requesting a meeting with your local MPP, it is important to always try to call first rather than emailing. While most MPPs have asked their staff to work from home until further notice, their constituency office phone number will still be active. A quick phone call to your MPP's office is one of the most effective ways to get in touch with your local MPP. You will often be asked to send an email as well, and if you can mention in your email that you already spoke with someone in the office through a phone call, it will greatly increase the chances that your email will be dealt with promptly.

MPPs split their time between their constituencies and Queen's Park and are very open to meeting with their constituents. It is important to call your MPP's constituency office, **not** their Queen's Park office. You can find a regularly updated list of all constituency offices through the following link: <https://www.ola.org/en/members/current/contact-information/constituency>

As a constituent, you may even have the opportunity to speak with your MPP directly. However, if you are speaking to a member of the MPP's staff, this can also be very effective as they will have the time to hear you out and they have the ear of the MPP.

When speaking with a constituency office, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- Identify yourself as a **constituent**. You are more likely to secure a meeting if the office knows you are a local resident.
- Be prepared to provide the reasons **why** you are requesting a meeting. It is always a good idea to have a draft agenda ready. A good starting point is: "We would like to have a chance to share some of the challenges and experiences faced by long-term care residents and their care partners in [riding name] and present solutions we think would help."
- It is important to be prepared with **3-5** possible dates for the meeting. Keep in mind, MPPs are usually fulfilling their legislative duties at Queen's Park from Monday-Thursday, and may have limited availability when the House is sitting. Consult the parliamentary calendar (included with this toolkit), and try to suggest dates when the House is adjourned.
- It is good to request a **one-hour meeting**, however, depending on the MPP's schedule, they may only be able to offer 30-45 minutes of their time. Be flexible.

- Due to the ongoing pandemic, most MPPs will be hosting meetings **virtually**. Any meeting you secure will almost certainly be online, or over the phone; this is for your safety and that of the MPP.

## Meeting with Your MPP

When speaking to an MPP, your own personal experiences with long-term care are paramount. Whether these experiences are coming from your perspective, or that of a family member or friend, it is important to use real-life examples to illustrate the points you are making.

On the day of your meeting, you will likely log on to a virtual meeting platform, such as Zoom or Skype. Make sure to log on at least five minutes in advance of the meeting time, to address any technical issues; in fact, it's a good idea to click on the meeting link the day before the meeting, so you can download any programs you may need to access the virtual meeting room.

Sit somewhere quiet, free of distractions and noise. Be aware of what is behind you as well; if you are using a webcam, your MPP will be able to see everything around you. Try and avoid "busy" backgrounds: people, pets, or other moving things in the background can be distracting.

Your MPP will join the meeting usually right when it is scheduled to begin. They will likely be joined by a staff member, who will take notes and record any follow-up actions. After some initial conversation, the meeting will get underway.

These items will help you before, during, and after a meeting with your MPP:

### 1. Preparation

- Draft a meeting agenda, and send this to your MPP's office. You may wish to use the *Sample Meeting Agenda* contained in this toolkit, which you can add to or change depending on topics you plan to raise with your MPP.
- Stay informed on issues you will be raising. Specifically, during the Covid-19 pandemic, policies and regulations are constantly changing for long-term care so it is important to stay informed.
- Develop a list of questions that you have for the MPP, as well as specific proposals for solutions.
- Organise your thoughts and make a list of points you would like to raise. It is perfectly acceptable to have notes, and refer to them during the meeting.

### 2. Introductions

- Everyone who is present at the meeting should start off by introducing themselves and their connection to the long-term care system (care partner, family member, friend, etc).
- Provide an overview of the meeting agenda and what you will be discussing.

### 3. Priorities for long-term care

- When presenting your case, be clear and concise by stating the exact nature of your concerns and precisely what you want the MPP to do.

- Share your story. Describe the impact restricted access has had on you and those you care about.
  - Review each of the points listed in the *Key Messages* document included in the Long-Term Care Self Advocacy Toolkit, as well as the Alzheimer Society position statement on care partner access.
  - Your MPP will likely ask you questions throughout the meeting, so ensure you come prepared with background knowledge of the issue. There is nothing wrong with not knowing an answer. If your MPP asks something you don't know, offer to follow-up with their office in the next few days. It is always better to follow-up later than to provide your MPP with inaccurate information.
4. Advice and Opportunities to work together
- Ask your MPP for their advice on supporting residents and care partners of long-term care. Are there any other concerns they have, specifically with the current state of Covid-19 having an impact on points raised during the meeting? Do they know others in their party who might be interested in meeting with you?
  - Offer to stay connected with your MPP. Often MPPs will host virtual townhalls or other events to discuss policy issues; you may wish to attend these, both to build a strong relationship with your MPP and to raise your concerns.
5. End of meeting
- Before ending the meeting, remember to thank your MPP for their time.
  - Let your MPP know you will be sending some information and documents to follow-up on what you discussed.

### Post Meeting Follow-up

1. Within 24 hours, thank your MPP on social media, tagging them in a public post. You may also want to include content related hashtags in your post to make it easier for others to find information specific to care partner access in long-term care. A sample post may include:
- Thank you MPP @[tagMPP] for meeting with us [today/yesterday]! We had a productive discussion about care partner access to LTC during the Covid-19 pandemic here in [name of community]. #ONpoli #ONhealth [add other local hashtags]

#### Relevant Hashtags

#ONpoli	#healthcare
#ONhealth	#carepartners
#ONseniors	#caregivers
#longtermcare	#LTC

2. Within 48 hours, send your MPP a follow-up thank-you email or letter that reinforces the key messages you brought up during the meeting. If your MPP had any questions, or asked for additional details, you can provide this information in the follow-up. You may wish to use the *Template Thank You Letter* contained in this toolkit.