



BC Election 2017

Election Activities - What you can do

Putting people with developmental disabilities on the election agenda.

Election Activities

what you can do

The media momentum that builds during an election period offers an excellent opportunity to advance understanding of our issues and to seek both public and political support. Here we outline some ideas for bringing our issues forward and ensuring that our broader community is aware of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Meet with individual candidates

Meeting with individual candidates is an opportunity to let the candidates know who you are and how they can best support people with developmental disabilities if elected.

Step by step guide to organizing a meeting with a candidate

1. Call the candidate's campaign manager, or your MLA's constituency office if he or she is seeking re-election.
2. Introduce your group or organization and ask for a brief meeting to outline your issues and hear their positions.
3. Meet with your group in advance to decide the issues you want to bring forward, what questions to ask, etc. Include self advocates and family members in your delegation and empower their participation.
4. Offer background information on the work of your group or organization and the other community resources needed to support people with developmental disabilities and their families.
5. Keep notes, leave information and be non-partisan in your approach.
6. Try not to leave without some form of commitment to our issues. As we prepare to work with a new government and new MLAs, it will be very helpful to have some foundation of support upon which to build a post-election strategy.
7. Send a brief thank you letter to the candidate with your appreciation for any agreements reached during the meeting.

Involve your networks, members or supporters

Share our election materials with families, self advocates and volunteers in your community or organization. Provide links on your website and share on social media.

Connect with others in the community and host a meeting to prepare people to speak to candidates who are door-knocking, in individual meetings, and at all-candidates meetings. Our election materials include key issue fact sheets and questions for candidates.

Attend All Candidates Meetings

Participation in all-candidates meetings promote full citizenship for people with developmental disabilities. Asking questions in a public forum increases the visibility of people with developmental disabilities and their families, and helps others to understand and support our issues.

Local TV and radio may also host broadcast versions of all-candidates forums. If they welcome callers, encourage families and self advocates to phone in with questions. If the forum doesn't include an open question period, contact the station ahead of time and ask the host to include questions on issues important to people with developmental disabilities in your community.

Tips on preparing for all candidates meetings:

- Organize a briefing meeting for your group, network or organization to discuss questions to raise at all candidates meetings. (See our issue fact sheets for suggestions.) Secure volunteer commitments to attend all-candidates meetings and ask questions.
- If local media attend all-candidates meetings, introduce yourself and offer to provide information, comments on your issues, etc.
- Preparing in advance will help ensure issues are communicated clearly when talking to local media.

Organize an all candidates meeting

If you wish to host an all-candidates meeting, it is a good idea to work with other disability and/or organizations in your community. All-candidates meetings are a lot of work to arrange, and candidates are more likely to attend forums that guarantee a large audience.

- Given the 28-day election period, secure a time and place as early as possible.
- Contact the candidates' campaign managers and secure a commitment.

- Strike a small organizing committee to deal with site logistics, publicity, meeting format, securing a moderator for the event, etc.
- Establish a candidate liaison person to assist candidates' arrival and departure and ensure each candidate receives information from your organization.
- After the meeting, send a brief thank-you letter to each candidate and any additional information you wish to provide.

Contact local media

- Contact your local radio and/or television stations to find out how they plan to cover the election and whether they will provide opportunities for public involvement.
- Monitor the news and use letters to the editor, call-in shows, etc. to raise and respond to issues important to you.
- Make yourself available to local news media and assist spokespeople for your organization in raising key issues.

Support people who may need assistance

Some people need help with voter registration and getting to the polls. Help ensure everyone who wants to vote is empowered to do so.

If you are with an organization that supports people with developmental disabilities, ensure they get the help they need to understand and participate in the democratic process as full citizens.

Use social media

Social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and blogs provide many opportunities to support the democratic process. Most party leaders and MLAs have Facebook pages where you can submit messages or write on their "Wall." Most news media have online comments sections and blogs where you can share your opinions and concerns about election issues. Stating positions clearly and respectfully, without getting drawn into angry "flame wars" online, is the most effective way to build understanding and support.