



**PRIMARY HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**  
**It's all about access!**

**Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)**  
**Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists**  
**and Audiologists (CASLPA)**  
**Canadian Physiotherapists Association (CPA)**

Lobbying Kit

## CAOT, CASLPA AND CPA IN ACTION

Now is the time to push forward with our issues of access to services and make ourselves known to MPPs/MLAs. CAOT, CASLPA and CPA have taken part in various awareness-raising campaigns, on their own, in partnership with each other or with other national organizations. The three associations need you to play a key role in building an even more focused and proactive advocacy strategy now and in the years to come. We want to stand up for ourselves to make sure all MPPs/MLAs know whom to call on when issues come up that relate to audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy or speech-language pathology.

CASLPA needs you to take an active role in lobbying. Make sure MPPs/MLAs and policy makers know the important role that audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists or speech-language pathologists play in the health care industry.

Here are some things you can do:

1. Write a letter to your MPP/MLA highlighting your issues. A sample letter follows.
2. Make an appointment to meet with your MPP/MLA (usually no more than 15-30 minutes). Once you have met with your MPP/MLA, let your national association know how it went by filling out the debriefing questionnaire included in this toolkit.
3. Attend events your MPP/MLA will be attending. To find out about upcoming events, contact your MPP/MLA's office or keep informed from the local newspaper.

CAOT, CASLPA and CPA have a strong reputation for putting information in the hands of those who need it: parents, family, friends and communities of those affected by the lack of access to services they require from audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech-language pathologists.

The contact you make with decision makers will work to help us fight for what we need. CAOT, CASLPA and CPA have worked diligently to ensure our members and associations are included in discussions on major health and education initiatives and public policy development. Success in political advocacy depends on local members delivering a strong message to elected decision makers. We must all work together to keep government focused on issues of importance to audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech-language pathologists, and to ensure that government is properly informed when considering laws and regulations.

## **Shared Vision**

All residents of Canada, irrespective of finances, social, culture or geographic considerations, should have access to the services they require from audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech-language pathologists.

## **Background Issues**

### **1. Public Policy Context**

Canada lacks a national primary health care framework with equitable funding mechanisms for primary health care professions. Canada's universal health insurance system was first implemented to provide hospital care and later was expanded to cover physician fees. As a result, public funding now covers almost all physician services, but less than half of the costs of services provided by other health professionals. Under the Canada Health Act, audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech-language pathology services are covered in hospitals (where services exist). Under special circumstances, provincial or regional programs may fund primary health care services. At present, primary care services in Canada are delivered chiefly by medical practitioners who focus on the diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury.

### **2. Roles and Relationships among Primary Health Professionals**

Defining roles and relationships among numerous practitioners in primary health care has been noted as one of the most significant and persistent challenges in creating a primary health care approach. These roles and relationships are affected by many factors, including:

- The predominant focus of the health care system on hospital and medical care and the consequent lack of value placed on chronic disease management, health promotion, illness and injury prevention.
- The lack of effective systems for transmitting health information to support continuity of services for consumers.
- Health care funding models focus on fee-for-service reimbursement for physicians and reward acute episodic care rather than continuing care and health promotion and disease prevention (EICP, 2006).
- Evidence is emerging about the economic value of alternative models of primary health care delivery involving interprofessional teams.

Proactive professional, interprofessional and consumer advocacy is required to inform federal and provincial public policy reform to eliminate these barriers that prevent the people of Canada access to needed health services.

### **3. What is Primary Health Care?**

A primary health care (PHC) system involves health professionals working together and delivering care within the context of the broader determinants (e.g., education,

environment, other socio-economic factors) that affect the health of individuals, families and their communities.

A PHC system coordinates and integrates services to respond to the health status of the population. It includes illness prevention, health promotion, diagnosis and management of health concerns. It encourages the use of the most appropriate health professional(s) to maximize the potential of all health resources (adapted from Marriot and Mable, 2002). It is the first level of contact with the health system, bringing health care as close as possible to where people live, learn and work. To be effective, a PHC system is integrated with other services and sectors (e.g., secondary and tertiary health care, education, workplace, child welfare, the criminal justice system). Effective responses at the primary health care level also diminish the need for services at other levels and in other sectors. ([www.eicp.ca](http://www.eicp.ca))

#### **4. What is Interdisciplinary Collaboration?**

Interdisciplinary collaboration refers to the positive interaction of health professionals, who bring their unique skills and knowledge, to assist clients, patients and families with their health decisions.

Conditions must exist for health professionals everywhere in Canada to work together in the most effective and efficient way, so that they can produce the best health outcomes for their clients.

The following seven conditions are required to sustain interdisciplinary collaboration in primary health care. These conditions do not stand alone — they are interrelated and should be considered as a whole.

- Health human resources;
- Funding;
- Liability reconciliation;
- Regulation reconciliation;
- Information and communications technology;
- Management and leadership; and
- Planning and evaluation.

## What You Should Tell Your Local Politician...

We ask that you contact your local Member of Parliament (MPP/MLA) as soon as possible. Request a meeting to discuss access to your profession (audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech-language pathology) services. If you can develop a relationship with your MPP/MLA on this issue, then you will have set the stage for future meetings on other critical issues for our professions.

The contact information for your local MPP/MLA can be found on the Parliamentary website at <http://canada.gc.ca/othergov-autregouv/prov-eng.html>.

Note that MPPs/MLAs should be making themselves available to meet with their constituents. If your MPP/MLA is difficult to meet with, request that you at least speak with him/her by telephone so that you can express your views directly. If you know him/her personally, do not hesitate to remind them or their staff of how you know each other when you are calling to make the appointment.

Prior to meeting with your local MPP/MLA, please review the meeting guide section of this toolkit to help you prepare. After the meeting, please fill out the debriefing questionnaire and send it to your national association at the coordinates noted on the bottom of the form. Your feedback will help to continue and improve advocacy efforts.

### Key messages:

- All residents of Canada, irrespective of finances, social, culture or geographic considerations, should have access to the services they require from audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists
- Audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists are integral to primary health care and should be included within interprofessional primary health care models and funding models

## Meeting Guide

Having a meeting with your MPP/MLA provides an opportunity to educate your MPP/MLA about you, your clients, as well as your profession (audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology) in general. It also provides an opportunity to highlight key messages about your national association.

Most MPP/MLAs will generally afford you only 15-30 minutes for your meeting, therefore you should be brief and to the point. Open your meeting by thanking the MPP/MLA for having taken the time from his/her busy schedule to meet with you and discuss this important issue. Remind the MPP/MLA of your name, title and the clinic/office you represent.

Say a few words about the purpose and aim of your meeting:

- To discuss access to services (please refer to the Key Messages indicated on the What You Should Tell Your Local Politician page of this kit)
- To raise the profile of your national association and its members as critical participants in public policy development, and as important contributors to health care and education in Canada
- To promote a better understanding and appreciation of your profession (audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists) across Canada

Do not hesitate to share personal anecdotes with your MPP/MLA. They can be particularly receptive to information that evokes emotion. Bring a client, if appropriate, to demonstrate your message. Pay attention to the time you have been allotted. Your MPP/MLA will appreciate you respecting his/her many commitments and busy schedule.

At the end of the meeting, briefly summarize the key points discussed. Be sure to add that if he/she has any questions, to either personally contact you or your national association at (contact information).

Please note that your national association will need an update on your meeting and this can be done by completing the attached debriefing questionnaire.

## Communicating with your MPP/MLA

### Step by Step Guide

Obtain contact and background information on your MPP/MLA by entering his/her name into [www.google.ca](http://www.google.ca).

1. Write a letter to your MPP/MLA highlighting important issues. (See the sample letter in this package.)
2. Make an appointment to meet with your MPP/MLA (usually no more than 15-30 minutes). At this point, your main goal is to introduce yourself as a stakeholder as part of an awareness-raising campaign. Make your introductions and leave behind a resource paper (i.e., fact sheet or position paper), available from your professional association.

Don't be put off if your meeting is with a policy analyst or other staffer, rather than your elected representative. Often, these people carry a strong influence and a meeting with them can be a good first step toward securing a meeting with your MPP/MLA.

**Make it as personal as possible.** Tell stories from your every day life: tell the stories of your clients, patients, yourself, or consider inviting one of your clients to participate in the meeting and provide a first-hand perspective from a citizen who is unable to access required services. This will help your MPP/MLA to understand the breadth and scope of the issues... and after all, "all politics are local," as they say. Make it local.

3. Complete the Debriefing Questionnaire after the meeting and return it by fax to your national association at:  
CAOT - (613) 523-2552  
CASLPA - (613) 259-8519  
CPA - (416) 932-9708

Or provide comments to:  
CAOT - [cvonzweck@caot.ca](mailto:cvonzweck@caot.ca)  
CASLPA - [ondina@caslpa.ca](mailto:ondina@caslpa.ca)  
CPA - [khoude@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:khoude@physiotherapy.ca)

## Sample letter #1

Date

Address  
Address  
Address  
Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, Member of Provincial Parliament/Legislature:

Imagine if your constituent came to hear you speak, but you couldn't speak at all. Imagine if your constituent came to talk to you, but you couldn't hear at all. The fact is, one in 10 Canadians has a speech, language or hearing problem!

I'm looking to you for leadership in the struggle to move speech and hearing issues to the forefront of the list of provincial priorities. Our province needs improved health human resources across the health sector, but particularly in the area of speech-language pathology and audiology. The leaders of this province need to develop a human resources plan for the health sector that is guided by the principles of patient-centred care and long-term, smart planning. That would be our first step towards improving our health care system, the quality of which is slowly eroding because of neglect and overload.

After all, with health care being such an important topic, **communication health should** be a part of the health care debate. Scores of Canadians are on lengthy waiting lists before they can see speech and hearing professionals – but these patients are not part of the national dialogue on wait lists, which is focused on only five priority areas. Shouldn't the needs of communicatively-impaired Canadians be a national priority too?

I would warmly welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss ways in which you can commit to serving those experiencing speech, language disorder or hearing problems in our riding. You can reach me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by e-mail at email@address.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Signed,

Name  
Position

## Sample letter #2

Date

Address  
Address  
Address  
Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, Member of Provincial Parliament:

I am writing to you as someone who is deeply concerned about the communication health of Canadians. Did you know that 1 in 10 Canadians has a significant hearing, speech or language problem? Communication health is an important component of the health care debate. The ability of Canadians to hear, speak, and use language to communicate is vital to their education, relationships, productivity, health and overall quality of life.

I'm looking to you for leadership in the struggle to move hearing and speech issues to the forefront of the list of provincial health-care priorities. Our province needs improved health human resources, but particularly in the area of audiology and speech-language pathology. The leaders of this province need to develop a human resources plan for the health sector that is guided by the principles of patient-centered care and long-term, smart planning. This would be a first step towards improving our health care system, the quality of which is slowly eroding because of neglect and overload.

I would warmly welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss ways in which you can commit to serving those experiencing hearing, speech and language problems in our riding. You can reach me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by e-mail at xxxxx.xx. I look forward to hearing from you.

Signed,

Name  
Position

Sample Letter #3  
Name of Writer, Occupational Therapy credentials  
Address  
Telephone,  
Email Address:

Date

Name of Contact  
Address

Dear (Name of contact):

I am writing to request an appointment to discuss health system issues, including access to occupational therapy within the context of collaborative interdisciplinary services in primary and community health care.

Occupational therapy is an essential component to promote health and prevent illness and injury. It helps to contain health care costs and has been proven effective in many health services areas: end-of-life care, mental health issues, and helping individuals, their families and communities deal with chronic disease.

Occupational therapists work with clients to develop skills to engage in meaningful occupations, which include self-care, paid and unpaid work, and leisure. Occupational therapists work with people to become self-sufficient, contribute to their communities and reduce reliance on public services.

Government, consumers, health professionals and Canadians in general have recently reached a consensus on a shared agenda for health care renewal in Canada. This agenda focuses on ensuring Canadians have access to necessary health services, when they need them and with the right health professionals.

As an occupational therapist, I am committed to working collaboratively with government to create quality health services that are accessible to the residents of this province. I look forward to meeting with you to identify ways we can work together to ensure these principles and proposed framework elements are part of health planning efforts.

Please contact me at the above telephone number or e-mail address to arrange a convenient time to meet.

Sincerely,

Name, (Occupational Therapy Credentials)

