



CMA'S ELECTION TOOLKIT: 2015

**Canada needs a
National Seniors
Strategy — make
your voice heard**

GET INVOLVED: YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) wants to make seniors care a ballot box issue in this federal election. The CMA is politically active but always non-partisan and sees itself as an honest broker of solutions to uphold patient welfare and represent the leadership of the medical profession. The federal election presents a unique opportunity to secure commitments from Canada's political leaders on health and seniors care.

Most politicians are not familiar with the issues that physicians and patients face each day. A few may understand these challenges, but they are not equipped with the tools necessary to address them. By engaging in the political process, you can make politicians aware of the health care issues that matter most. A collective voice cannot be ignored.

KEY MESSAGES

Below are key messages that may be helpful as you talk with political candidates to explain why seniors care must be a ballot box issue this election.

The CMA is calling for a national seniors care strategy

- We need the help of all Canadians to carry the message forward and make seniors care a ballot box issue during this federal election.
- DemandAPlan.ca is a public campaign to encourage the development of a national strategy on seniors care. So far thousands of Canadians have added their voice to our call for action.



Canada's population is rapidly aging

- Canada's older population is set to almost double over the next 20 years, while the 85 and older population is set to quadruple.
- The latest reports indicate that while seniors account for just less than 15% of the population, they consume approximately 45% of public health spending. Based on current trends, the CMA projects that the proportion of provincial health budgets spent on seniors will grow to almost 62% by 2036.
- As you can see, this is truly a national issue — one that will affect all Canadians in the decades to come.

Public health care in Canada won't survive unless seniors care is redesigned

- When Canada's universal health care system was designed 50 years ago, the average Canadian was 27 years of age. Today the average age is 47. Our health care system was not designed to serve an aging population.
- Around 15% of the hospital beds in this country are taken up by people — primarily seniors — who no longer need hospital care but have nowhere else to go.
- Hospital beds cost about \$1,000 per day, whereas a long-term care bed costs \$130 and home care costs \$55. The congestion in our hospitals causes a ripple effect throughout the rest of the health care system.
- When you consider the issues we're grappling with for seniors care, you quickly realize that if we can fix seniors care we will have gone a long way toward fixing the whole health system. This is why our aging population represents both a challenge and an opportunity.

What is CMA doing to support a national seniors strategy?

- Our goal is to promote a strategy that is built around the needs of individuals and their families, to create a system that puts the patient at the centre.
- Over 55 patient and non-medical groups have joined an Alliance for a National Seniors Strategy to support our call for a national approach.
- We've heard from the CMA Physician Advisory Panel on a National Seniors Strategy that Canada must improve the way we provide care for seniors; we must focus more on community and home support and less on hospital care. This will ensure patients are in the right place receiving care tailored to their needs.
- It's for these reasons that the CMA is dedicated to making seniors care a priority issue, calling on the three major federal parties to develop and release a seniors strategy in advance of the federal election.

FIVE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

To ensure that seniors care becomes a major issue in the election campaign, all Canadians must become leaders in carrying the message forward.

Below are ways you can contribute to putting seniors care at the forefront of the election campaign. If you need any assistance, please contact us — we would be pleased to help.

1. Add your voice to DemandAPlan.ca

The CMA and an alliance of partner organizations have joined together and launched DemandAPlan.ca. Sign up and add your voice to the call for a national seniors strategy. By doing so, you will be able to stay engaged with conversations and campaign news and learn about any announcements we are endorsing. We also encourage you to post your personal stories and thoughts related to seniors care.

With your help, the DemandAPlan alliance will be working until Election Day to accomplish the following goals:

- to make sure seniors care is a ballot box issue in the election campaign
- to persuade the major political parties to include a national seniors strategy in their campaign platforms

The DemandAPlan website also provides you with a sample letter to write to your Member of Parliament and other local candidates in advance of the election. Under the “Take Action” tab, you will find all the information you need to make the connection.

Join the conversation and demonstrate your support for a national seniors strategy now:
<http://www.demandaplan.ca/>

Using the DemandAPlan promise tracker, you can keep an eye on any key issues political leaders are advocating for and plan to include in their party platforms. In doing so, you can hold politicians accountable for their promises. By early October, the CMA will evaluate to what degree these political commitments correlate to the objectives of a national seniors strategy.

2. Engage with social media

Use social media to share information about seniors care with your audience. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are all valuable ways to disseminate information, voice your concerns and collaborate with other Canadians.

For example, you can “Like” the Facebook page of one or more of your local political candidates, follow candidates on Twitter, or share CMA videos on YouTube. We encourage you to spread CMA’s messages throughout all your social media feeds.

Here are a few sample tweets:



CanadianMedicalAssoc @CMA_Docs Jun28

Have you considered whether your health care system can support Canada’s aging population? Find out more ow.ly/NlfjW #seniorsplan

↩️ ↻ 12 ★ 2 ⋮



Dr. Chris Simpson @Dr_ChrisSimpson Jun28

Helping people stay in their homes & communities is better for pts, families, taxpayers and society. #seniorsplan telegraphjournal.com/telegraph-jour...

↩️ ↻ 8 ★ 4 ⋮



SAC | OAC @SAC_OAC Jun 16

Don’t leave seniors out in the cold. @SAC_OAC supports a national #seniorsplan #slpeeps #audpeeps



↩️ ↻ 2 ★ 4 ⋮

[View photo](#)

Use the hashtag #seniorsplan to join the conversation.

View and share our videos on seniors care:

CMA YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/canadianmedicalassoc

Here's what we can do for you:

- provide you with facts and statistics to share
- help connect you with politicians and other supporters in your community
- grow your network

3. Raise seniors care with your local candidates

Writing a letter, sending an email or making a phone call are some of the ways that you can raise seniors care with your local candidates.

When you make contact, introduce yourself as a constituent and provide some context for your contact. Here are some possible talking points:

- Ask the candidate for his/her stand on the three health care questions listed in [section 5 - participate in local riding events](#).
- If you are contacting the candidate in writing and you expect a reply, clearly indicate so in your email or letter.
- Offer to assist/support your preferred candidate by volunteering on his/her campaign.

The DemandAPlan website also provides you with a sample letter to write to your Member of Parliament and other local candidates in advance of the election.

Click on the link below to access the letter writing tool:

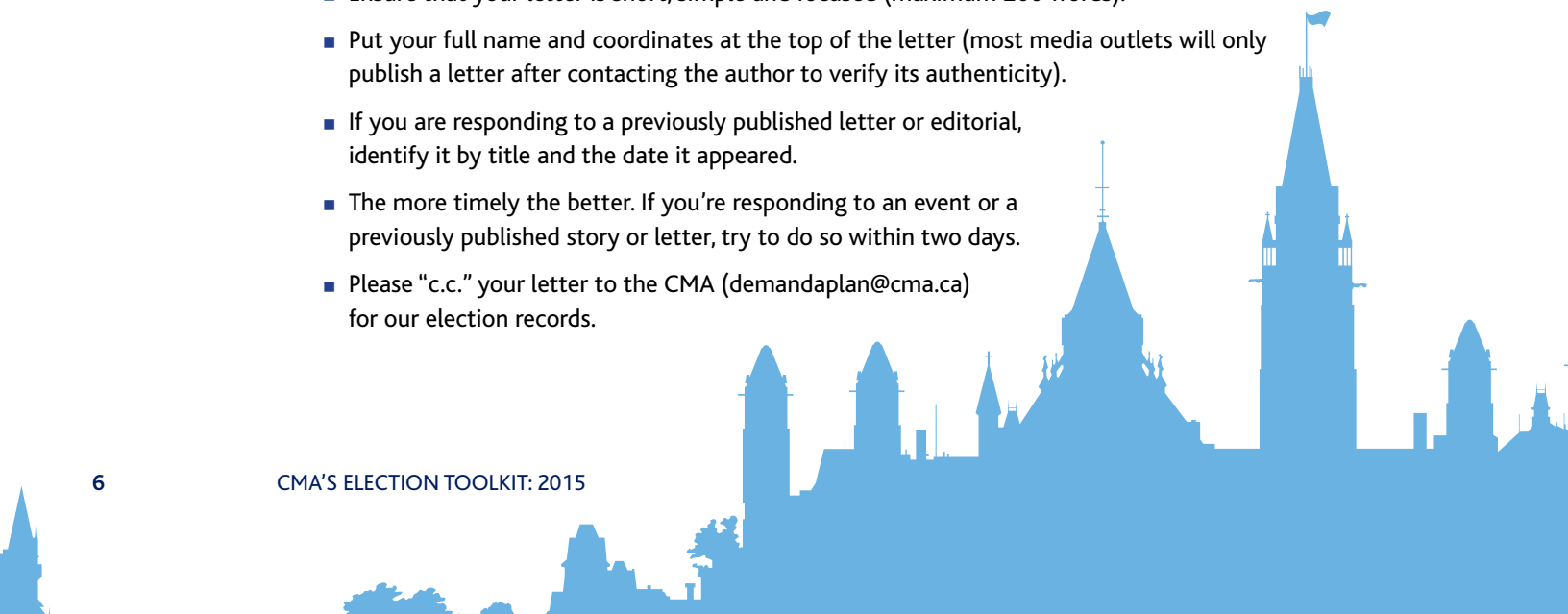
<http://www.demandaplan.ca/take-action>

4. Write a letter to the editor

Writing a letter to the editor of a news outlet is one of the most effective advocacy tools. The key to getting your letter published is ensuring that it is focused, concise and relevant.

Letters to the editor can be written for various purposes, such as responding to a previously published letter, editorial or article; sharing a point of view; advancing an organization's message (such as the CMA's message on a national seniors strategy); or attempting to influence politicians' perception of public opinion.

- Ensure that your letter is short, simple and focused (maximum 200 words).
- Put your full name and coordinates at the top of the letter (most media outlets will only publish a letter after contacting the author to verify its authenticity).
- If you are responding to a previously published letter or editorial, identify it by title and the date it appeared.
- The more timely the better. If you're responding to an event or a previously published story or letter, try to do so within two days.
- Please "c.c." your letter to the CMA (demandaplan@cma.ca) for our election records.



Click on the link below to view New Brunswick physician Dr. Dharm Singh's letter to the editor published in The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick): http://www.demandaplan.ca/commentary_action_needed

5. Participate in local riding events

Election campaigns provide many valuable opportunities to become involved in a variety of political events, to ask candidates questions about their parties' positions and to prompt debate among the parties on key issues.

If you plan to attend a local riding event, such as an all-candidates' debate or a town hall meeting, here are some questions you can ask to ensure seniors care is a high-priority issue during this campaign:

1. What role do you believe each level of government should play in addressing the challenges of an aging population?
 - a. Should Ottawa take a leading role?
2. Are you currently caring for an aging family member?
 - a. If so, where do you see gaps in support and resources?
3. Our hospitals are congested because of an influx of elderly patients; how do you think the federal government can help to ensure that alternative care is available in the community? What will you do to ensure that this issue is being discussed at a political level?

If you'd like to organize your own town hall meeting, the CMA can help. If you require assistance, please contact grassroots@cma.ca or call 800-682-6367.

Here's what we can do for you:

- provide candidates' contact information
- provide logistical support and draft meeting invitations and agendas, etc.
- help you promote the event

SUMMARY

The upcoming election is an ideal opportunity for all Canadians to take a stand on health care issues like that of seniors care. The impact of Canada's aging population will affect us all, and we need you to share your experiences and offer your insights into how we can support this population. As such, we hope that you educate yourselves, engage with your communities and become leaders in the discussion. By doing so, we will turn advocacy into action.



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Authorized by the Canadian Medical Association