

Political Advocacy Strategies **Your Opinion Matters; Make your Voice Heard!**

You too can support health care for your family, friends and loved ones by being informed and contacting your three levels of Government. A community's voice matters; your voice matters, it is generally more effective to join a group of like-minded people committed to a specific goal.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has"
– Margaret Mead

The Facts

- Health Care is not "FREE" in Canada
- Ontario Hospitals are required to raise **100%** of funds for the purchase of new equipment and **10%** of all capital development projects
- Scarborough and Rouge Hospital (SRH) has 3 hospital sites and 6 satellite dialysis and mental health sites, making us the **3rd largest hospital in Ontario**
- SRH has **187,975** Emergency department visits per year, yet only **802** beds; acute inpatient services are expected to increase by **24%** between 2013/14 and 2028/29

Persuasion:

All advocacy must be persuasive to a wide range of individuals. Persuasion has three main ingredients:

1. Lobbying

Lobbying is the process through which individuals and groups articulate their interests to the Federal, Provincial or Municipal Governments in order to influence public policy and/or government decision-making. Lobbying involves attempts to meet face-to-face with decision makers to persuade them to support an advocacy issue or proposal.

2. Clout

Clout is the influence or power in political or social circles, demonstrated through mobilizing popular support, by working in coalitions and/or using the media to inform, educate and be visible in the public sphere.

3. Negotiation

Negotiation involves bargaining to seek common group or, minimally, respect for disagreement. To bargain with decision makers, you need to know your own power and your opponent's, as well as what is negotiable.

Key Factors that shape your advocacy strategy:

Context

- Every political environment is different
- Each presents its own opportunities and constraints
- Governments have different degrees of legitimacy and power
- Political decisions are made differently depending on the nature of the state, politics, media, etc.
- A society's mix of culture, religion, ethnicity, race, and economic development affects the level of tolerance and opportunities for social change

Timing

- Each historic moment presents different political opportunities and constraints
- International economic trends may make a country tighten or expand political space
- Elections or international conferences may provide opportunities to raise controversial issues

Community Group

- In designing your strategy, it is important to be aware of the strengths and limitations of your community group
 - How broad and strong is your potential for support?
 - Do you have allies?
 - What resources can you rely on?
 - Are your goals clear and achievable?

Risk

- Not all advocacy strategies can be used universally
- Sometimes involving individuals who are usually excluded or vulnerable populations, may cause family, social or community conflict
- Challenging relations to power, tends to generate conflict

How YOU Can Influence Health Care in the Legislative Arena!

- Write a letter, phone, or email your MPP/MP/City Councillor
- Start a social media campaign to raise awareness
- Start or sign a petition
- VOTE! *Voting in elections is the most widely used method for citizens to influence Government

"Thousands of Facebook likes for a cause or issue is helpful, but ultimately passive. Direct engagement with elected officials is key: Use technology to directly communicate to politicians – (through) email, phone calls, tweets, comments – to influence policy outcomes"

– Brett Bell, Founder of Grassroots Online