

Making a Difference Today

Handbook for Government Relations and Advocacy



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Acknowledgements

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Making a Difference Today is for you – volunteers and staff who carry out – or who would like to carry out – government relations and advocacy work for the MS Society of Canada from coast-to-coast.

Introduction: The purpose of this handbook

- **Module I:** Define government relations and advocacy and explain how they relate to the mission and goals of the MS Society of Canada.
- **Module II:** Clarify the roles and responsibilities of national, division and chapter/unit volunteers and staff.
- **Module III:** Explain the steps involved in the process of effective advocacy.
- **Modules IV and V:** Empower new and experienced volunteers to become agents of change by providing useful strategies, tools, resources and guidance.

Module I: MS Society Framework and Definitions

The mission of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is to be a leader in finding a cure for multiple sclerosis and enabling people affected by MS to enhance their quality of life.

Until we end MS, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is committed to ensuring that people with MS and their families have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of life. We do this in many ways, and one is through government relations and advocacy – the focus of this handbook.

What is government relations and advocacy?

Government relations and advocacy is any activity carried out by MS Society staff and/or volunteers which supports the mission by seeking to improve government policies, private industry practices and/or public attitudes. Government relations and advocacy work can take many forms but must always be **non-partisan** (does not involve direct or indirect support of, or opposition to a political party or candidate for public office).

Government relations take place municipally (locally), provincially and nationally or sometimes simultaneously at all three levels, and targets elected officials, political advisors and public servants. Non-governmental advocacy (sometimes referred to as social action or community relations) takes place locally, provincially or nationally and usually targets members of the public, media, external for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, and private industry.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada has been engaged in government relations and advocacy activities almost since its inception in 1948. The National Board of Directors established the National Government Relations Committee (formerly the National Social Action Committee) in the late 1980s.

What is the MS Society trying to change?

The priority goals are to:

- **Remove barriers** to employment and income security (focus is mainly at federal and provincial levels)
- **Enhance access** to timely provision of health care, including appropriate drugs and therapies (focus is mainly at federal and provincial levels)
- **Improve access** for people with MS to all aspects of life in their communities including: timely delivery of home/ community care, supportive housing and appropriate long term care (focus is mainly at municipal, regional and provincial levels)
- **Increase financial supports** for individuals in their roles as caregivers of persons with MS (focus is mainly at federal and provincial levels)
- **Increase barrier-free accessibility** throughout Canada (focus is at all levels)
- **Increase funding** for MS research specifically and health research in general (focus is mainly at federal and provincial levels)
- **Strengthen the position** of the MS Society as a charitable organization through changes in legislation and regulations (focus is mainly at federal and provincial levels)

Priorities may change.

For the most up-to-date information visit the MS Society of Canada website www.mssociety.ca or contact your division government relations department.

How do government relations and advocacy support the MS Society mission?

Did you ever try to solve a jigsaw puzzle without the picture on the box? Have you noticed that once you fit a few key pieces together it becomes much easier to solve the rest of the puzzle?

Think of the mission as a jigsaw puzzle. To solve our puzzle (find a cure and enhance the lives of people with MS), we need to be able to imagine what the picture on the box looks like and where the key pieces fit.

Momentum 2015, the MS Society of Canada’s strategic plan, paints part of the picture and identifies government relations as one of the key pieces of the puzzle. Momentum outlines sixteen strategic directions or broad priorities the MS Society will pursue in order to achieve its mission.

Through government relations and advocacy work, every level of the MS Society works together and speaks with one voice, bringing us closer to solving the puzzle.

Who is responsible for government relations and advocacy?

The roles and responsibilities of each level of the MS Society closely relate to those of the different levels of government in Canada.

Momentum 2015 Strategic Direction 4

Increase responsiveness to MS issues among governments, local health authorities, corporations and other relevant organizations.

Federal Government

The government of Canada is responsible for making decisions, enacting legislation and funding programs that affect all Canadians.

Federal Responsibilities	
Employment insurance/ CPP	Defence
Transportation (air, rail, marine, national highways)	Foreign affairs
Citizenship & human rights	Postal service
Health	Criminal law
Taxation and banking	Census
	Trade regulation
Key People	
Prime minister	Deputy ministers
Cabinet ministers	Public servants
Members of Parliament	Political advisors

* Bolded items are those that are generally the primary areas of focus for the MS Society's government relations activities

Provincial/Territorial

Canada's thirteen provincial and territorial governments make decisions; enact legislation and fund programs in their own jurisdictions.

Provincial Responsibilities	
Property and human rights	Education
Health	Natural resources
Social services	Environment
Housing	Administration of justice
Transportation (provincial roads, some transit)	
Key People	
Premier	Cabinet ministers
Members of: National Assembly Legislative Assembly Provincial Parliament	Deputy ministers Public servants Political advisors

* Bolded items are those that are generally the primary areas of focus for the MS Society's government relations activities

Regional governments

Common in British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario regional governments administer and deliver services to large geographic areas with multiple cities, towns, villages and unincorporated communities.

Regional Responsibilities	
Regional health authorities	Social Services
Regional transit	Housing
Key People	
Regional chair	Municipal directors
Regional council	Regional staff

* Bolded items are those that are generally the primary areas of focus for the MS Society’s government relations activities

Municipal/Local

Municipal governments are responsible for making decisions and delivering services at the local or community level. They work with regional and provincial administrations to identify local issues and priorities.

Municipal Responsibilities	
Public transit	Waste/water
Social services	Zoning
Community accessibility	Emergency services
Parking	
Provincial Responsibilities	
Mayor	Aldermen
Municipal employees	Councillors

* Bolded items are those that are generally the primary areas of focus for the MS Society’s government relations activities

The National Government Relations Department takes the lead role in advocating for changes to federal programs and policies to meet the needs of the MS community. The national team relies on the **collaborative** input and support of division/chapter volunteers and staff to identify issues, set priorities, develop and implement strategies.

Division government relations staff works closely with government relations committees to take *lead roles in provincial and regional activity*. Division teams work with chapter staff and volunteers to identify issues and set priorities while supporting nation-wide initiatives.

Chapter volunteers have an important part to play in *assessing* local needs, *advocating* for local changes and *supporting* provincial or nationwide campaigns. With the support of chapter or division staff, volunteers may work alone or as part of a small team to tackle priority issues in their own communities.

In Focus

National

- Income security
- Caregiver support
- Research funding
- Charitable Law

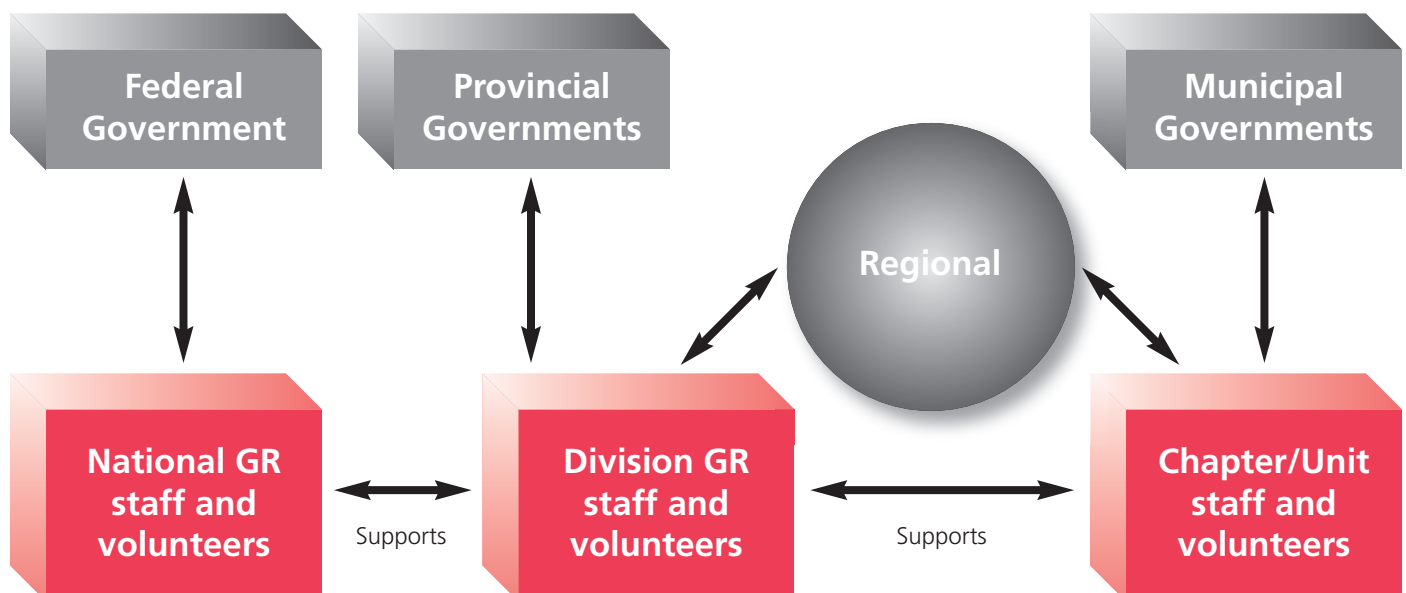
Division

- Access to healthcare
- Access to medications
- Home and long-term care
- Supportive housing
- Accessibility in the community
- Income security
- Caregiver support
- Research funding

Chapter

- Accessibility in the community
- Local championing of provincial and federal initiatives

Influencing Government Policy



What does success look like?

The national petition campaign is proof that when MS Society staff and volunteers work together, speaking with one voice we can be successful.

National petition campaign

In June 2009, 11 Members of Parliament, from across the country representing all parties, rose in the House of Commons and tabled copies of a petition that had been signed by more than 4,000 MS Society members and friends. The petition urged immediate action on three issues: permitting spouses to claim the caregiver amount (tax credit); making the disability tax credit a refundable benefit; and making Employment Insurance sickness benefits more flexible to assist people with episodic disabilities.

The first-ever MS Society petition was one more tool in the ongoing push for better income security for people with MS and one that allowed thousands of people from coast-to-coast to participate.

The petition campaign illustrates how the MS Society works together. Several years ago, the National Government Relations Committee identified income issues as a key priority and also identified three changes the federal government could make immediately to help people affected by MS. Face-to-face meetings with MPs and key government officials and presentations to House of Commons committees reinforced the message. E-mail advocacy campaigns in 2008 and 2009 successfully reached almost 100% of MPs with messages about the need for change.

Why a petition campaign?

It was a way for even more MS Society members to become involved and to cultivate Members of Parliament as champions. In September 2008, the MS Society national office distributed the petition to divisions which then sent it on to chapters. During the fall and winter, more than 4,000 members, friends and donors responded enthusiastically; signatures were collected at conferences, annual general meetings, fundraising events and even Christmas dinners. Finally, national office staff collected the petition and asked key MPs to present them in the House of Commons bringing the circle to a close.

Module II Volunteer Roles and Opportunities

Volunteers wear many hats, and Mike is a good example of someone who has worked hard juggling those hats and the responsibilities that go with them.

Mike became active in volunteering for MS Society fundraising after being diagnosed with MS in 2001. He later joined the board of directors of Durham Region Chapter of the MS Society as social action director.

As social action director, Mike chairs the chapter's Social Action Committee and acts as liaison between the committee and the chapter board. Mike has become the "go-to" person for chapter members and acts as both personal and political advocate in the areas of accessibility, age-appropriate long-term care, and supportive housing.

To complement his role as social action director, Mike became involved with the Durham Region Accessible Advisory Committee. After a couple of years working with the AAC committee and getting to know its members and procedures, he took on the role of chair. The committee provides advice to regional councillors and regional Transit Department staff about ensuring that accessible buses and specialized transit for people with disabilities is a reality.

But that's not all – Mike is also a member of the Ontario Government Relations and Community Social Action Committee (OSAC) which sets government relations priorities for the MS Society Ontario Division and provides advice about government relations strategies and activities.

Later on in his involvement, Mike also joined the MS Ambassador group. MS Ambassadors in Ontario help advance the MS Society's government relations priorities with Members of Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament in communities across the province, at the grassroots level. This program is ideal for people who may want to get involved but who may not want to sit on committee, or in Mike's case, another committee. With his MS Ambassador hat on, Mike wrote to all the MPs in his region and met with two of them in support of better income security for people with MS.

By wearing many similar hats, Mike helps the MS Society advance its advocacy goals at the local, provincial, and national levels. This ensures people affected by MS in his community are well represented and are informed of what is going on at all levels of government.

Module 1 defined government relations and advocacy. It also explained the structure and interrelated roles of the MS Society with the various levels of government in Canada. This module will help you to understand your role as a volunteer, working in government relations and advocacy on behalf of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada.

Thank You!

First, thank you for choosing to dedicate your time to volunteer with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. We strive to provide you with meaningful opportunities to make a positive difference in the lives of people affected by MS.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada recognizes that there are many issues of concern affecting people with MS and that not all of those issues have been or will be identified as priorities of the MS Society.

That does not mean those issues are not important. If you are concerned about an issue not covered by the following volunteer positions, you may wish to take personal action. You will find the section Discovering Your Potential for Action at the end of this module, please also consult Mapping My Potential for Action on page 52.

Remember: you are entitled to use the tools in this handbook to take personal action but approval is required if you plan to represent yourself as speaking for the MS Society of Canada.

What is my role as a volunteer?

Volunteers are vital to every level and department of the MS Society, from casual special events volunteers at small chapters, to long serving members of divisional committees, to members of the National Board of Directors; without the dedicated service and passion of our volunteers, we would not be able to fulfill our mission.

This is no different for government relations and advocacy. We rely on the input, feedback, support and hard work of our volunteers to set priorities, devise strategies and advocate our position(s).

What do volunteers in government relations and advocacy do?

Government relations and advocacy/social action volunteers are successful agents of change when they:

- Build relationships, meet with and educate key influencers, local politicians and business leaders about the issues facing people affected by MS
- Participate in other community boards, committees and councils
- Champion nation-wide and division priorities in their own communities

Division level volunteers

Most MS Society priorities involve or target provincial and federal governments; therefore, division volunteers work in the provincial sphere while supporting both local and national initiatives. This multi-directional input and support is a crucial element of our success.

Key activities include working with staff to review legislation and policies, setting agendas and meeting with key provincial decision makers. Sometimes division volunteers are asked to support nation-wide initiatives and may be asked to meet with Members of Parliament and other key decision makers within the federal government.

Division level volunteers are not required to be active in their local chapters, but many of them are.

Activity at more than one level provides volunteers with broader experiences, wider perspectives and stronger voices.

Division volunteers usually represent different geographic areas of a given province or region, which means interaction with staff and other volunteers often takes place by phone or email.

Who do division volunteers report to?
Volunteering in government relations at the division level requires involvement with the decision-making processes of regional, provincial and sometimes municipal and federal governments and corporations. Volunteers are expected to act appropriately in their roles as representatives of the MS Society. This means that volunteers must be ethical, honest, respectful and constantly aware of how their work helps to achieve our mission. All government relations volunteers at the division level are: supported by and report to division government relations staff and may work with other volunteers or staff on committees, task forces, or in other ways.

Every division has slightly different reporting guidelines and mechanisms.

Ask the government relations staff at your division what the guidelines and expectations are for you.

How do I get involved with my division?

Contact your division and notify staff of your interest in government relations and advocacy. They will help you determine what you can do to support division priorities.

Always be sure to provide and ask for feedback on the work you are doing. Regular reports are important, so staff can coordinate other volunteer and staff activities for maximum effectiveness. Regular reporting will help you to evaluate your activities and further clarify your role(s) in making positive change for people affected by MS.

MS Ambassadors

MS Ambassadors fulfill a key volunteer role within the MS Society. The activities of Ambassadors are closely tied to the Society's strategic plan. Ambassadors are recruited by and work closely with division staff on specific division level priorities including: government relations, media relations, community engagement and fund development.

Who do MS Ambassadors report to?

Ambassadors often wear more than one volunteer hat with the MS Society. Some are members of division committees and others are active in their local chapters, but when they wear the Ambassador hat, they work with and report to division staff.

Chapter level volunteers

If your local chapter has a government or community relations committee or if your chapter needs government or community relations volunteers, consider working with them on local priority issues such as accessible public transportation or municipal accessibility standards. **Key activities** include meeting/educating community leaders and local decision makers and participating in community advisory committees.

To find out if there is an Ambassador program in your division, contact the government relations department by calling 1-800-268-7582.

Your chapter may not have a government/community relations or social action committee. If you think it should, speak to your chapter's board and division staff about starting one.

All elected officials are accountable to the people who elected them. Therefore, chapter volunteers may be asked to support provincial and national initiatives by writing to or meeting with their own representatives.

Who do chapter volunteers report to?

Government relations and advocacy volunteers at the chapter level are supported by, work with and report to chapter boards and where applicable, staff at the chapter or division. Volunteers working at the chapter level on priority issues are expected to act appropriately in their representation of the MS Society. This means that volunteers must be ethical, honest, respectful and constantly aware of how their work helps to achieve our mission.

How do I volunteer with my chapter?

Contact your chapter and find out if you can join an existing social action or government/community relations committee. If your chapter does not have this type of committee, there may be other volunteers working on local issues that you can team up with.

What if I want to volunteer at the national level?

Contact staff at your division to find out how you can work locally to support nation-wide priorities. Key activities include meetings with MPs.

Discovering your potential for action

Are you concerned about an issue that has not been identified as a priority by your division or the National Government Relations Committee? Do you wish to contribute your time and skills to multiple levels of government relations activity? Are you interested in making more of an impact locally?

Your potential for action really depends on you. You decide your own level of involvement. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Which issue concerns me most?
- Is it a priority issue as outlined by the National Government Relations Committee or my division government relations and social action committee? (For priority issues, see page 4)
 - **YES** – Contact staff at your division to discuss the issue and find out how you can support the work that is already being done.
 - **NO** – Contact staff at your division to notify them of your concerns and let them know if you plan to take **personal action** on the issue.
- How much time can I devote?
- Which skills do I have to offer?
- Which skills would I like to gain?
- Do I know other people who are concerned about the same issue?

For more information on identified priorities and your potential for action, see page 52 for *Mapping My Potential for Action*.

Remember:

You are entitled to use the tools in this handbook to guide your personal action plans but approval is required if you plan to represent yourself as speaking for the MS Society of Canada.

Module III Understanding the Advocacy Process

Case Study – Thumbs Up! St. Thomas

Recognizing that accessibility was a challenge for many members of their community, a group of volunteers and community leaders in St. Thomas, Ontario came together in 1999 to form the Thumbs Up! program to encourage businesses and services to become accessible, and to recognize and reward those that are.

As Cathy Topping, member of the MS Society, put it: “We decided the old saying about it being easier to catch flies with honey was correct, so we designed a program that rewarded businesses for being accessible.”

The first small group of volunteers walked and wheeled around St. Thomas and noted which businesses were accessible and which were not. Those that were accessible received a Thumbs Up! decal. Those that were not received tips on how to become accessible. Within a few years, businesses were calling the volunteers, asking to be inspected so they could receive their decal.

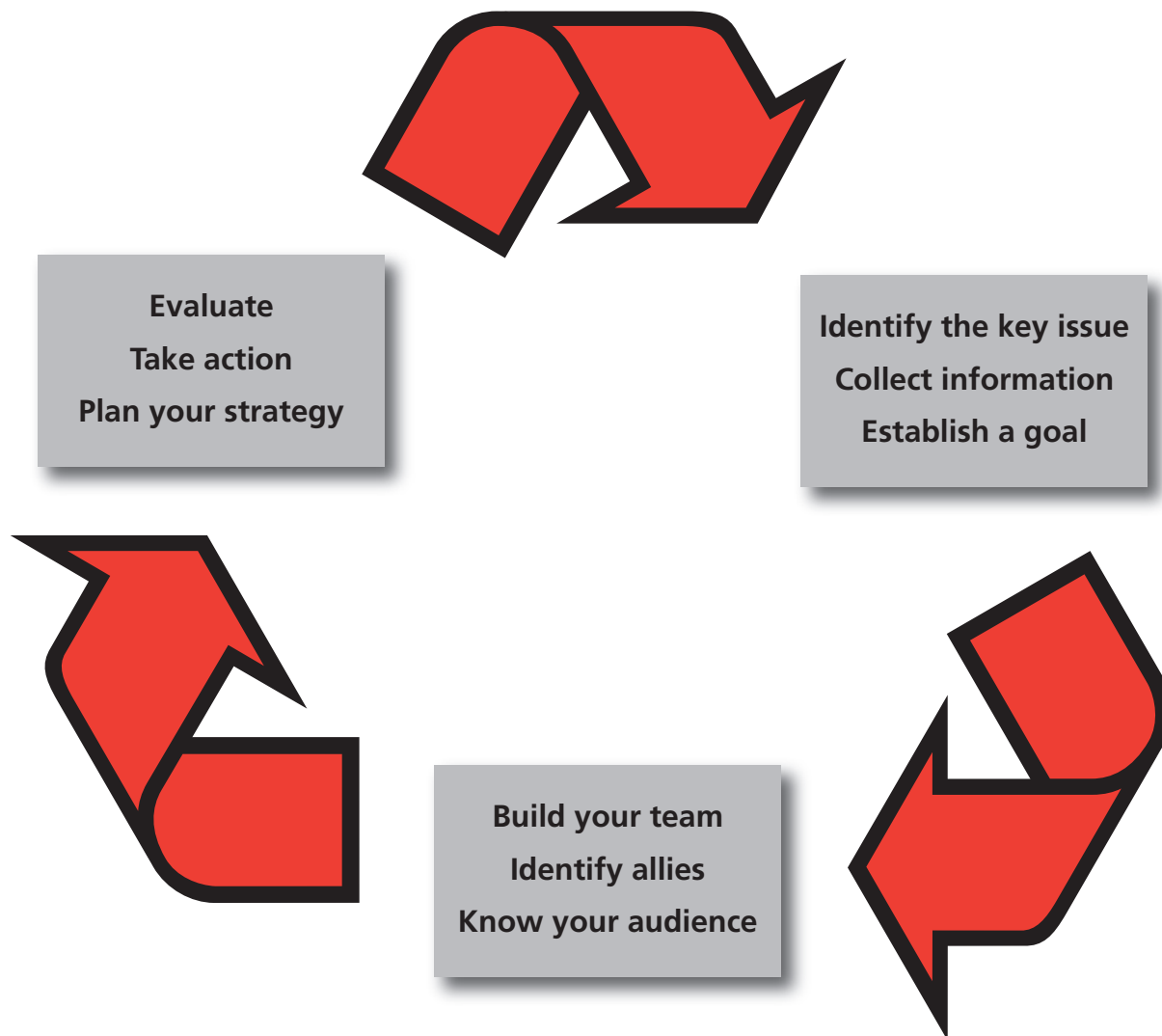
What started as a great but simple idea has now become a full-fledged program that increases the safety and accessibility of businesses in the community. Volunteer Thumbs Up! ambassadors use standardized accessibility checklists to determine whether or not businesses will receive the official Thumbs Up! decal and certificate. Those that do display it proudly, because the decal lets people with disabilities and the elderly know that they can do their business safely and independently at “Thumbs Up!” recognized locations.

Thumbs Up! has been honoured with a Civics Award by the City of St. Thomas, and the program has spread across Ontario and into parts of Manitoba.

Thumbs Up! is a stellar example of how local collaborative action can lead to positive change in your community, and in other communities as well!

For more information on Thumbs Up! visit <http://thumbsupstthomas.com/>

Advocacy is a process involving a great deal of thoughtful planning and evaluation; understanding it will improve your chance of success.



This diagram shows the nine key steps to effective advocacy presented in this section. The order of the steps is not set in stone. There is no perfect formula. Find what works for you and your team, but you should always start by identifying the issue. You will need to collect information before you plan your strategy. You may also wish to build evaluation in throughout the process.

Identify the Key Issue

The first step is to identify the key issue. It sounds easy but do not take this step lightly. Go beyond the general problem and be as specific as possible so you can suggest specific solutions. Focusing your efforts on a specific issue will make it easier to perform the other eight steps to effective advocacy, and it makes it easier for key decision makers, such as politicians and public servants, to understand the problem and fix it.

General Problem	Key Issue
My town is not very accessible	The sidewalks downtown are too high and narrow to accommodate people with wheelchairs and walkers

Identifying the key issue may take time and present challenges. Remember that this is an important part of the planning process. Organize a brainstorming session to narrow the problem down to a key issue. Use the “**But why?**” method.

John uses a walker to get around town and feels his town is not very accessible for people with physical disabilities. His friend Jane who has used a wheelchair for many years agrees.

But why? Jane and John both say they are finding it more and more difficult to run errands downtown.

But why? The sidewalks are busy and cluttered making them difficult to navigate for people with assistive devices.

But why? The sidewalks are too high and narrow.

Collect Information

Once you know the key issue, begin collecting information. Research is crucial; it can make or break your chance at success. What is obvious to you may not be to others. People are resistant to change, meaning you must educate them.

Before you begin your research, contact other volunteers and government relations staff; they may be able to point you in the right direction.

Research:

- **Provides substance** – Gather facts and statistics, hard evidence is compelling. The cost of inaction may actually be higher than the cost of your proposed change. Where possible, use statistics to prove this.
- **Uncovers new information** – Stay up-to-date and reduce the risk of surprise.
- **Builds strategy** – Understand the problem and the solution.
- **Adds personality** – Add a human element and a sense of urgency. Make it easier for people to understand how the issue affects them.
- **Builds confidence and credibility** – Knowing that experts agree with you builds confidence, and people will take you more seriously. If you always have well-researched answers, people will begin to recognize you as an authority.
- **Reveals threats** – Understand your opponent's position so you can answer their questions or disprove their claims.

Some questions to keep in mind:

- Who is affected (how many)?
- How bad are the effects?
- How often does the problem occur?
- What other problems are related?
- What keeps the problem the same?
- What makes the problem worse?
- How will this solution make it better?
- Will it create other problems?

For more tips on how to conduct effective advocacy research, see page 30.

Establish a Goal

Once you have identified the issue and conducted the research you will be able to establish your goals. Based on what you have learned about the problem and how it affects you, your family, people with MS and your community, choose the result you would like to achieve.

Be **S.M.A.R.T.** about it. Your goals should be **S**pecific **M**easurable **A**chievable **R**ealistic and **T**imed. You should also be able to identify how your goal relates to the MS Society mission or how it fits with identified priorities.

Key Issue	SMART Goal
The sidewalks on Main Street are too high and narrow to accommodate people with wheelchairs and walkers	Convince town council to widen Main Street sidewalks by X cms and reduce curb height by X cms by summer 2012

The goal is:

Specific – focuses on a single problem (sidewalks vs. entire town)

Measurable – includes numbers or percentages (widen by X cms)

Achievable – focuses on one area of improvement (Main Street)

Realistic – identifies the correct audience (town council)

Timed – identifies a timeframe (by summer 2012)

Remember:

Change does not happen overnight. Try not to set yourself up for disappointment by choosing unrealistic target dates.

Build Your Team

Working alone may work well for issues that just need a quick fix and require minimal time and energy, but you should develop a team or committee to solve bigger problems. There really is strength in numbers.

Remember to check in with the division government relations department. Staff may be able to help you identify other people who are interested or already working on similar issues.

The MS Society takes the privacy of members and volunteers seriously, so individual's contact information cannot be shared without prior consent.

Whether you are a member of a pre-existing team or plan to build one from the ground up, there are some principles of team building you should consider.

- Take the time to understand everyone's strengths, weaknesses and *most importantly their expectations*
- Agree upon a *clearly defined* vision of what success will look like
- Assign roles and responsibilities according to *strengths, interests and comfort levels* (let team members self identify, never make assumptions about what people will want to do)
- Build trust and accountability by *talking about issues as they arise*
- **Have fun!**

Here are some benefits of building an advocacy team:

- Multiple voices increase credibility
- The work can be shared
- Internal support, encouragement and motivation
- Broader networks
- Diverse skills, different perspectives and unique approaches build stronger positions

Identify Your Allies

Allies are the people outside your team positioned to help you advance your cause. They may be respected authorities, public figures, business leaders, media or community groups with similar missions. Sometimes your best allies are found in the places you least expect.

Chances are you will not be alone in your quest to achieve your goal. Government relations and advocacy at all levels – local, provincial, regional and national – benefit from building networks and forming coalitions.

Consider these examples:

Chapter level – See *Case Study – St Thomas Thumbs Up!* on page 16.

Division level – British Columbia & Yukon Division is a member of the Better Pharmacare Coalition (BPC). The BPC, formed in 1997, represents provincial and national health organizations and consumer groups with a mandate to speak on behalf of over two million citizens on issues related to the BC Government's PharmaCare (prescription drug) program. www.betterpharmacare.com/

National level – The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is one of several members of Neurological Health Charities Canada (NHCC). NHCC is a collective of organizations that represent people with chronic, often progressive, brain diseases, disorders and injuries in Canada. NHCC's role is to provide leadership, evaluate and advance new opportunities for collaboration specific to advocacy, education and research projects – related to brain health.

Know Your Audience

Identify the people with the power to make the change you want. They and anyone else who influence their decision-making ability are your audience.

For example, if you have identified your local city councillors as your key audience, who are the other people you will need to convince?

Key Audience – member of city council

External Influences	Internal Influences
Community leaders	The mayor
Lobbyists	Political advisors and staff
Local politicians	Other constituents
Think tanks	Other councillors
Media (usually a last resort)	Public servants

Your audience may include people for and people against your goals. Even if your desired change will benefit everyone, you may encounter opposition to your methods, your timelines or simply the idea of change itself.

Practicing the 5 P’s will help you to maintain your optimism and your sights on success:

- **Persistence** – Keep at it and get more people on your side this will help to keep the focus on the issues at hand.
- **Patience** – Delays are inevitable. Understanding this and building patience (and reasonable timelines) into your strategies will put you a step ahead.
- **Personal stories** – Use the information you gathered during the research step but for maximum effectiveness use personal stories to show the decision maker how the issue affects them or their constituents.

- **Poise** – Keep your poise, maintain your dignity and demonstrate respect for everyone involved in the decision making process even if they choose not to support you. Remember you are acting on behalf of other people.
- **Purpose** – If you feel frustrated by lack of response or lack of action, you must remember your purpose. You wish to make the world a better place for people who are affected by MS

Plan Your Strategy

Strategies are road maps to success. Strategies or action plans help you to identify what needs doing, who needs to do it and when it needs to be completed.

Your action plan might look something like this:

Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Date(s) to be Completed	Resource(s) needed	Collaborator(s)
Send letter to city councilor	Jane	October 14	Sample letter statistics	John
Place follow-up phone call	Jane	October 23	Telephone script	John
Meet with council member	Jane and John	November 20	One page brief	Division staff
Send thank-you card and additional info	John	November 23	Note cards addresses	Jane
Issue is brought to committee	Councillor	December 13	Report	John, Jane, division staff

To keep yourself and your team on track, it is important to write down your action plan and update it as the process moves forward. If you have difficulty choosing the dates for tasks to be completed, try the work-back timeline approach. When you set your S.M.A.R.T. goal, you should have chosen a date

for completion. Start with that date and work backward. Don't worry about little details at this point, focus on the big events and where they fit into your schedule; then go back and fill in the rest.

After you have finished writing down your action plan, look it over for completeness, sleep on it, and gather feedback from other people.

Remember:

You cannot control scheduling conflicts or other people's actions so it is important to refer back to your plan often and make any necessary changes.

Take Action

You can find samples of the tools you will need for this stage in section four, the toolbox.

Here are some useful things to remember when you get to this stage.

Focus on the positive! Publicly thank and recognize those who have helped you.

Prepare for small victories. People need to see results to stay interested and motivated. Celebrate every achievement no matter how small.

Present the issues in the way you want others to see them. Frame the issue in your voice, in your own words. This will make it easier to answer questions and respond to criticism.

Keep it simple. Try not to think of success as a single event but a journey with many steps.

Be prepared to compromise. Stay true to your vision but be open to alternatives. Look for win-win solutions. Establish two-way dialogue with opponents and the community.

Be strategic. Don't underestimate the importance of timing. Know when to lay low and when to hit the ground running.

Stay the course. Don't be intimidated by the power or influence of your opponent to a point of inaction.

Look for the good in others. If someone is "out to get you" there is a good chance that they do not have all the facts. Educate them on the issue and they will be more receptive.

Keep your eyes on the prize. Maintain a positive image in the public eye by avoiding the temptation to fight back against personal attacks.

Make issues local and relevant. Show people how the issues relate to them. Use local statistics, personal stories and gain the support of community leaders.

Get broad-based support. Look for ways to bridge the gap between "us and them". Try to get people on "the inside" to be on your side. Ask what they need from you.

Work within your comfort zone. Set goals and limits for yourself or the group that everyone can agree upon.

Make your opponents play by their own rules. Get to know the rules that are in place and use them to advance your cause. Take advantage of mandatory public hearings and make use of existing complaint services.

Go along for the ride. Link up with related events when possible to increase your publicity and strengthen your position in the community.

Enjoy yourself! Have fun, celebrate victories and take satisfaction knowing that you are doing good work advancing an important cause.

Evaluation

How will you know if you chose the right tactics to achieve your goals? How will you know what success looks like? How will you convince people on your team to stick to the plan?

Evaluation is necessary because:

- **It helps to build a movement.** Small victories will build an appetite for greater success.
- **It helps to identify learning opportunities.** Evaluation leads to new and usually better strategies.
- **It helps to boost morale.** Evaluation can uncover success that you have previously overlooked.
- **It changes perspective.** Evaluation gives you the opportunity to look at your own work through a different lens.
- **It helps to build a foundation.** You will have a base of knowledge to use for future action.

“Success means that your information is on the right table, before the right people at the right time.”

Amanda Sussman author of the book *The Art of the Possible – A Handbook for Political Activism*

What goes into a successful evaluation process?

- You must take it seriously. Be clear with yourself about what you expect to gain from the evaluation process.
- You must evaluate specific objectives. Identifying specific objectives in the beginning will make it much easier to evaluate for success.
- You must define reliable and valid measures. You will need to develop measures that tell you what is really happening.
- You need to collect data on key indicators. Sometimes the data already exists; sometimes you must collect it yourself.

If you can assemble “before and after” statistics on your chosen indicators, you can determine whether your action made a positive difference. Did the number of accessible parking spaces increase?

If a specific goal was to get 20% of the young women in your community to sign a petition, you will need to count the actual number of signatures. It is not enough to say “we have many signatures”

How will you ensure the collected signatures are coming from young women who actually live in the community? You will also have to define “young” and know how many “young” women live in the community in total.

City Hall can probably tell you exactly how many public parking spaces are accessible.

They probably cannot tell you how many accessible parking spaces are located in private business lots. You may have to dig a little to find this information.

- You must make the necessary adjustments. Even when you have met or surpassed all your goals, there are most likely some areas in which you can improve. It is important to make the necessary adjustments in strategy to continue moving forward.

If town hall ignored the initiative to increase the number of accessible parking spaces due to an upcoming civic election, the adjusted strategy might be to make it an election issue.

Some of the materials in this module were adapted from the free resources available on the University of Kansas' online Community Tool Box found at <http://ctb.ku.edu/en>

Collect Information adapted from How to Conduct Research: An Overview contributed by Phil Rabinowitz edited by Val Renault

Take Action adapted from Survival Skills for Advocates contributed by Eric Wadud, Tom Seekins and Stephen B. Fawcett edited by Bill Berkowitz and Jerry Schultz

Evaluation adapted from Measuring Success: Evaluating Comprehensive Community Initiatives contributed by Aimee Whitman and Eric Wadud edited by Bill Berkowitz and Jerry Schultz

Module IV The Advocacy Toolbox

Case Study – Atlantic Division Drug Program Advocacy

Newfoundland and Labrador's reputation as one of the most kind and caring parts of Canada was at odds with it having the most restrictive publically funded drug programs in Canada. The Atlantic Division decided to change that.

In November 2006, following approval by the division board of directors, the advocacy team of volunteers and staff launched a broad-based campaign. The team capitalized on Newfoundland's often-unconstrained media culture and used the people's sense of humour and gritty determination to their advantage.

They made use of significant dates: At Christmas, a news release proclaimed "Province gives lump of coal to MS patients". On Valentine's Day, Society representatives presented Premier Danny Williams with a giant heart-shaped cookie iced with the phrase "Premier, Have a Heart"; and for Easter, they met with the Minister of Health and Community Services to present him with a giant Easter bunny wearing a T-shirt that said "Premier, Hop to it!". The media began to wonder what the MS Society would do next and the issue became an ongoing hot topic on open line talk radio shows and in other unrelated but politically charged media stories.

The message was succinct and remained the same – Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with MS faced a dilemma: go without vital MS therapies, cut back on other necessities or quit their jobs and apply for social assistance. The delivery was lighthearted and non-confrontational, but always clearly focused, and was presented at a time when it seemed the government was ready to make a move. MS Society members were asked to write letters and meet with their local members of the provincial legislature. The MS Society was determined that a short timeframe for change was best and they wanted to work with the government.

The Society lobbied successfully for people with MS as well as for all people in Newfoundland and Labrador in need of any catastrophic drug. On April 23, 2007, the government announced a significant expansion to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program to the benefit of all people facing high drug costs.

Module I covered the MS Society of Canada's definitions of government relations and advocacy and explained how those activities relate to the mission. Module II covered how MS Society volunteers and staff at various levels work together to identify priorities and speak with one voice. Module III covered the process and key steps of effective advocacy.

Together, those modules provide the big picture. This one gives you the tools. You will find this toolbox useful if:

- You wish to be an agent of change
- You have an action plan but need some help to follow through
- You are looking for practical samples you can adapt for your own use
- You have found your voice and want to speak up in support of people affected by MS

If you cannot find the tool you need or if you are unsure which tactic to use, let someone know. Consult other chapter members or the advocacy network you have been working with and remember that division staff will be pleased to assist you.

Tips for Effective Advocacy Research

Tip #1: Always keep your audience and purpose in mind. This will help you stay on track and will allow you to find the most relevant information.

Tip #2: Build a knowledge network. Finding the information you need is much easier if you ask the right people for help. Talk to the people in your knowledge network to learn what may already be known about your issue.

- MS Society staff, researchers and doctors – Start with people you know who are knowledgeable about MS and other related issues
- Other advocates – Sometimes, they already have the information you need; if not they will probably know where to get it. Remember that this is about building a knowledge network so be sure to offer your help to them in return
- Librarians – Librarians are often under used; their skillful assistance will save you precious time and energy. Do not be afraid to ask for their help
- Journalists – Journalists are in the business of trading information. They love local angles; offer a local perspective on a topic in exchange for the information you are seeking (One small warning: a journalist's objective is to get the story printed or broadcast. Make sure that the journalist won't "break" the story before you are ready.)

Tip #3 Understand the basics. Focus on the most important details first.

If you want a new by-law, which requires property owners to clear sidewalks within 24 hours of a snowfall, then you should research the snow removal by-laws of nearby cities and their enforcement practices.

It is not necessary for you to become an expert in weather or urban planning.

Tip #4: Accuracy is crucial. You should only use information that you understand. If you are having difficulty understanding concepts or legal language, ask the people in your knowledge network for help.

Tip #5: Use reliable sources. You may have to do some fact checking or cross-referencing. If you find information in a newspaper or magazine article, try to find the original sources cited by the author.

If you are trying to gauge public opinion, it is perfectly acceptable to interview or survey people in the community. However, you should be careful about drawing unscientific conclusions.

You live in a city with 50,000 residents and have randomly surveyed 30 people on the street asking them if they agree that the city needs a new snow removal policy; 25 said “yes” they agree.

You can safely assume that you are on to something but don’t overstate the validity of your methods with statements like: “the vast majority of taxpayers in this city agree we need a new snow removal by-law”.

Be honest and let the facts speak for themselves. “I surveyed 30 people on the street and 25 agreed we need a new snow removal policy.”

Tip #6: Always exercise caution when using the internet as a reference. Sites like Wikipedia allow users to upload information, and they do not always provide sources to back up their claims. Public libraries often have access to reliable scholarly databases. Ask the librarian for help finding and using these valuable resources.

Tip #7: Always keep track of where you found your information. Keep a detailed record and refer back to it when someone questions a statement you make.

Elevator Speeches

Before you meet with key influencers and decision makers, spend some time thinking about how you will promote yourself as an advocate on behalf of the MS Society.

Imagine you have been planning a strategy aimed at city hall and have been waiting several weeks for the opportunity to speak with the mayor about your issue. As you are leaving your doctor's office, you find yourself face to face with him in the elevator.

To get the mayor's attention, you need to be clear, concise and memorable. You only have about 60-90 seconds. What will you do and say?

Try using these five steps.

Step #1: Identify yourself and those you represent. Are you speaking on behalf of the MS Society, a community based coalition or are you simply a concerned citizen?

Step #2: Identify your concerns (be brief) – What is the key issue? How many people are affected? How are they affected?

Step #3: Identify your proposed solution. Tailor this to your specific audience.

Step #4: Indicate how you plan to follow up or follow through.

Step #5: Thank the person for their time.

Sample Elevator Speech

Step #1: “Hello Mr. Mayor, it’s a pleasure to meet you.

My name is John. I have been a downtown resident for 25 years and am an active member of the MS Society X chapter and the Accessible Community Coalition (ACC). There are at least X people in this city affected by MS, many of whom face accessibility barriers in and around the downtown core.

Step #2: Unfortunately, people who use wheelchairs are sometimes unable to enjoy the beautiful winters for which this city is known. Sidewalks are not cleared of snow fast enough, making them dangerous and impassable for wheelchair users. Last winter, I had to use the street and was nearly hit by a car. I had to hire someone to run my errands for the remainder of the winter.

Step #3: The ACC is proposing the enactment of a new by-law requiring sidewalks to be cleared within X hours of the last snowfall. This is comparable to the by-laws which are in place in (nearby cities) X and Y. I know public safety has been a priority of yours and this will help ensure disabled pedestrians can access downtown streets and continue being productive citizens year round.

Step #4: Please take my card; I am always available to answer any questions or concerns you might have about this. I recently sent a meeting request to your assistant and will be following up by phone early next week.

Step #5: I am glad I had the chance to meet you Mr. Mayor. Thanks for your time. I look forward to seeing you again.”

You should draft and rehearse a couple different elevator speeches suitable for various audiences and occasions. You never know when or where you will meet potential allies or decision makers and have opportunity to chat them up, like in your favorite coffee shop or grocery store.

Remember: you must be clear, concise and memorable.

Relationship Building

When your goal is to change a corporate or government policy, it is easy to get caught up in the complexity of the system and lose sight of the people.

To solve that problem, build relationships with the right people and:

- you will better understand why and how policies are made
- you will appreciate the time and effort involved
- you will develop more realistic strategies, and
- **you will have greater success**

Look at your **SMART** goal and try to name the people involved in the decision making process. What do you know about them? What *should* you know about them?

Goal: City council will amend the current snow removal by-law to require businesses and residents to clear sidewalks within X hours of the last snowfall. The new by-law will take effect in October 2011.

Names Mayor _____ Assistant _____
Councillor _____ Assistant _____
Dept. Chair _____ Assistant _____

You should try to get to know the gatekeepers. The frontline or behind-the-scenes people whose primary responsibility is to manage access (of people and policy proposals) to key decision makers; executive assistants, deputies, political advisors and speechwriters typically hold positions of trust and influence, *also known as power*.

When you are educating decision makers or their staff, you should always:

- Learn as much as you can about your audience before meeting them (try to find biographical information online, consult your network)
- Use what you have learned about their experiences and interests to establish a rapport and help position yourself as a resource
- Be courteous and respectful of their authority
- Be honest and open about your objectives
- Follow-up any contact with a thank you letter and information on any issue that they raised or any commitments they made

Set some relationship building goals for you or your team.

Relationship building goals:

- ✓ Learn the names and job titles of three additional people in the mayor's office
- ✓ Find out how long the mayor has lived in _____. Use the information to create a graphical timeline of progress on the issue since the mayor arrived.

_____ Confirm the name of the mayor's wife so we can include her in future thank-you notes or Christmas cards.

There is no need to be sly about this process. Be yourself and ask the questions that you would normally ask when you meet someone for the first time.

When you are in meetings with decision makers, you may be expected to do most of the talking. Outside of those meetings, you should practice listening more than you speak and make sure that when you leave the office you jot down any helpful points you picked up during casual conversation.

Effective Public Speaking

If you are new to public speaking or you are an old hand looking to brush up on your skills, you may find some of these tips helpful.

The wind up:

Know the venue – How much time do you have? How many people will be there? Will you have the use of audio/visual aids? What types of audience or speaker distractions do you foresee?

Know the audience – Are you speaking to elected officials, business leaders or community activists? Do they have a prior knowledge of your topic?

Know the material – If you are using speaking notes on pages or index cards, keep them in the right order. Practice once or twice in front of a mirror, then run through once for your family. If you are using a Power Point presentation, check it at least twice for typos.

The pitch:

Know the lingo – You should use always strive to be clear and concise. Avoid **jargon**, acronyms and unnecessary **filler**. If you have to use acronyms to avoid stumbling over long words then define them the first time you use them. (For instance, if you choose to refer to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada as the MS Society, then you should explain to your audience what MS stands for). Remember: If you don't understand something, you shouldn't present it.

Know your style – Body language can sometimes speak louder than words. There are some sure signs of nervousness you may wish to avoid. Try not to grasp the podium, pay attention to your hands, avoid tapping and try not to read off the screen.

Strategies to project confidence: make eye contact with many people, move around without pacing, control your breathing, if you misspeak or forget to say something don't apologize, wait until you have finished making your point then say "I should correct something I said earlier..."

Know your pace – If you think you sound like you are speaking too fast or too quiet, stop and ask the audience. Mix it up a little, try to use different tones and variations to emphasize key points. Try adding a little humour or sharing anecdotes, if you enjoy yourself it will help keep your audience engaged.

Know when to wrap up – If you see that you are losing the audience and you cannot seem to re-engage them, share the most important points they need to know, then move on to the questions and answers. Question period is less nerve wracking for you and more interesting to the audience because you are sharing the floor. If you skipped or forgot a point during your presentation, try working it into a question or answer.

Email and Online Communication

When it comes to using social media or email as an advocacy tool, you should be aware of pros and cons.

Method	Pros	Cons
Email	Quick	Often misused
	Easy	Easy to ignore
	Convenient	Impersonal
		No control where your message ends up
Social media (Facebook, twitter, blogs)	Decision makers are online	Often handled by staff
	Reach large audience	Moderated
		Easy to fake
		No control where your message ends up

If you are planning to use email, blogs, Facebook or any other form of social media to contact or interact with a decision maker there are a few rules you should follow.

- use plain language
- keep it short and on point
- identify and represent yourself well (this applies to any people or organizations you speak on behalf of as well)
- be respectful
- if you mention others you should copy (cc) or blind copy (bcc) them

Phone Calls

Before you make a phone call, check that you have:

- ✓ pen and paper
- ✓ a calendar or organizer with your availability
- ✓ script or talking points
- ✓ fact sheet
- ✓ correct spelling and pronunciation of the person's name
- ✓ a quiet/private area to make the call
- ✓ something to keep track of time

During the call, you should:

- identify yourself and those you represent
- begin by stating the purpose of your call
- speak slowly, in a loud clear voice
- use plain language, avoid acronyms or jargon
- stay on point
- use facts and examples, suggest specific solutions
- be prepared to suggest meeting times, dates or locations

Concluding the call:

- summarize and clarify any new information you have gathered from the person
- double check the agreed upon meeting place/time/date
- Thank the person for their time

After the call:

- type up your notes immediately
- follow-up any promises you have made

Follow-up

Follow-up is a key part of successful relationship building. Anytime you promise to provide (or ask for) additional information you should follow-up. Not delivering on promises will reduce your credibility.

Every time you interact or communicate with someone, whether in person, by phone or online there is potential for follow-up. Emails are quickly becoming a favorite follow-up method because they are a quick way to send or receive information. Phone calls, letters and additional meetings are also common methods.

The important thing to remember is that when you suggest a follow-up method or timeline, stick to it.

Follow-up essentials:

- remind the person who you are and when you met or spoke with them
- indicate whether you are providing additional information or requesting it
- indicate if there is a need for further action or additional follow-up
- thank the person for their time
- indicate your willingness and availability to provide any other information the person may need to make their decision

Writing Letters to Officials – Sample Letter

August __, 20__
 Alderman Jane Smith, Ward 11
 City of _____
 P.O. Box _____
 Any City, __ __ __

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a constituent in your ward and I am writing you today on behalf of the _____ chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society of Canada to ask you to support the initiative for greater accessibility in _____.

MS is a progressive and often disabling disease of the brain and spinal cord. There are at least # residents of _____ affected by MS; many of whom use wheelchairs and walkers. All residents of _____, who use wheelchairs and walkers, face barriers to mobility. These barriers severely reduce their ability to contribute productively to the vitality of our city.

Currently, people like me who use wheelchairs are unable to navigate downtown streets safely, within an appropriate time after a snowfall. Several times last winter, I was unable to use the sidewalks and had to travel on the streets, impeding traffic and placing drivers and myself in danger of causing a collision.

Please support the upcoming vote to change the existing snow removal by-law from 48 to 24 hours following a snowfall. If you require any further information to assist you with your decision, please feel free to contact me anytime. Thank you in advance for supporting the initiative for greater accessibility in _____.

Sincerely,
 Name _____
 Address _____

 Ph. _____

Letters should always use plain language and provide suggested solutions for one or at most two key issues. Letters should be no more than a page or two in length, which means a few key

facts or examples, are sufficient. If you need to provide more, then consider enclosing a separate fact sheet and refer to it in the letter.

Remember

- If dealing with the provincial or federal government, you should forward a copy of any letter you send (and any response you receive) to your division so the staff is aware and up-to-date on your progress.
- Sending form letters tends to be less effective, but they can usually be adapted to reflect your own voice.
- If you mention other people in the letter, it is good etiquette to “cc” them so they are aware of what you are saying.

Fact Sheets and Information Briefs

Fact sheets, sometimes called information briefs, are useful because they provide quick and portable access to important statistics and facts; they are especially helpful when you are writing, phoning or meeting with a decision maker. If you are working on a division initiative, you can obtain official fact sheets or briefs from division government relations staff. If you are working locally and would like to create your own use this template and have your draft approved by your chapter board or division staff before using it.

Sample Information Brief

Community Accessibility in _____

What the MS Society _____

Chapter recommends:

The municipal council of _____ enacts a new by-law to ensure city sidewalks are cleared of snow within X hours after a snowfall.

Basic facts:

- MS is the most common disabling neurological condition in young adults in Canada.
- Canada has one of the highest rates in the world, approximately 1 in 500 Canadians are affected by MS, with three new cases diagnosed each day.
- MS can cause loss of balance, impaired motor skills and eventual paralysis.

MS and accessibility in _____

- There are at least # people who live and work in _____ who are affected by MS.
- There are an estimated # people in _____ who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices to navigate city streets.

- Every year it is estimated that there are # days that people in wheelchairs are unable to navigate city streets due to snow, which has not been cleared from sidewalks.

Our view:

- Recently there have been some major improvements to the level of accessibility in _____ but there is still a need for improved municipal standards and by-laws to enforce them.
- People who use wheelchairs and assistive devices are productive members of the community. We need to eliminate barriers to mobility and allow people with disabilities to contribute to the vitality of _____.
- Specifically, we want city council to mandate that snow must be cleared from sidewalks within 24 hours of a snowfall.
- If we continue to work together on these issues, we can make _____ the most accessible community in _____.

This is a very basic example; your fact sheet will probably include at least a few more points in each section.

You may wish to go in to more detail with each fact but remember you should aim for a fact sheet that is under two pages in length.

Meeting With Decision Makers

Successful advocacy requires strong relationship building. Relationships are built on trust and two-way communication. Face-to-face meetings are effective advocacy tools because they build trust; add human elements and convey the urgency of your issue. The difference between writing a letter and holding a meeting with a decision maker is like the difference between reading the paper and participating in a lively discussion by experts. You may learn a lot from a newspaper article, but the discussion is much more captivating and memorable.

The following tips will help you to prepare for future meetings with business leaders, elected representatives and other key decision makers.

Prior to the meeting:

- Send an introductory letter via fax or email
- Follow up with a phone call within 2-3 days and request a meeting
- Be patient but persistent
- Review relevant biographical information
- Prepare an agenda with established objectives and send it in advance of the meeting
- Know where the office is and be on time

Elected officials tend to have very busy schedules. Expect senior or higher-level officials to be generally less available as they have more duties.

If scheduling becomes difficult, **do** accept offers to meet with staff in instances in which elected officials may not be available. Staff can then brief the elected official on your issue.

During the meeting:

- Stick to your agenda and remember your objectives
- Be passionate and respectful, not argumentative and confrontational
- Pay attention to body language, yours and theirs
- Provide specific local examples with specific local solutions
- Take notes
- Leave behind any appropriate material such as position papers, fact sheets, contact information
- Thank them for their time and indicate when you plan to follow up

Following the meeting:

- Send a thank you letter to the people you met with, include any follow up information that you promised
- Follow up again in a few weeks time to see if there has been any progress on the issue and to find out if there is any other information you can provide
- Fill out and return the debrief form you received from division staff or use the sample provided below

If the person you are meeting asks a question and you do not know the answer, do not be afraid to say, "I don't know, but I will find out". Then find the information they requested and follow up within a few days.

It is better to take the time to find accurate information than to provide a "best guess" on the spot.

Debrief Form – Meeting with Officials

**Name and position/organization
of Official(s) you met with:**

Date of meeting:

Location of meeting:

**Names of MS Society
representatives:**

Primary issue/topic of discussion:

Secondary issues/topics of discussion:

Please detail the Official's thoughts and comments on:

Primary issue/topic

Secondary issues/topics

Did you ask the Official to do any follow-up work? Did they make any promises to you? If so, please provide details.

Did you promise to do follow-up work? Please provide details.

Will you need assistance or additional information to help you perform the next steps? Please provide details.

Were any other issues raised in the meeting? If so, what are these issues and what kind of follow-up is required?

Please provide your overall thoughts on the meeting. What went well? What didn't go well? What could be done to make the experience better the next time?

Thank you letter

The most important thing to remember about thank you letters is to send them! Decision makers and politicians like to be thanked and recognized for their work just as much as anybody else. Too often people miss this excellent opportunity to strengthen their position and remain top of mind.

Sample thank you letter

Dear _____,

It was a pleasure meeting with you on Friday, ____ to discuss the accessibility issues faced by people affected by MS in _____. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for meeting with us and **to provide you with the additional information you requested.**

Accessibility in _____

As we discussed, there are at least # people in _____ who are affected by MS, and many of them use wheelchairs and walkers to get around. There have been some very positive changes made over the past five years including: (list relevant changes in bullet points)

- New accessible parking spaces
- _____

However, there is a need for a new by-law to enforce the time it takes for sidewalks to be cleared of snow. Currently people who use wheelchairs and walkers are required to travel in the streets after heavy snowfalls because the sidewalks are not cleared within a reasonable time frame, which we believe to be 24 hours. This is a public safety hazard and it reduces the opportunities for people with disabilities to be productive and to help positively shape the future of this city.

Additional Information

During our meeting, you asked me if I had further statistics on _____. I have contacted the _____ division of the MS Society of Canada and spoke with _____ who has informed me that in 2007 there were _____.

I hope this additional information is helpful. If you have any further questions regarding _____, please let me know.

Once again, on behalf of the _____ coalition and the MS Society of _____, I would like to thank you for your time and interest in helping to improve the accessibility of _____. We are looking forward to working with your office to ensure the appropriate changes are made over the next few months.

Sincerely,

Cc:
Encl:

Advocating for changes to government policies, private industry practices and public attitudes that will benefit all people affected by MS is serious work; but it can also be quite fun.

We hope the information, tools and resources compiled in this handbook are useful in guiding your activities but remember that they are only guides. You should always collaborate with staff or other volunteers and when possible, be creative. Remember the case studies included at the beginning of each module. They are all amazing examples of what we can achieve when we are creative, think big and speak with one voice.

Thank you for volunteering your time with the MS Society of Canada.

Some of the materials in this module were adapted from the free resources available on the University of Kansas' online Community Tool Box found at <http://ctb.ku.edu/en>

Tips for Effective Advocacy Research adapted from *How to Conduct Research: An Overview* contributed by Phil Rabinowitz edited by Val Renault

Module V Government Relations and Advocacy Resources

Module I covered the MS Society of Canada's definitions of government relations and advocacy and explained how those activities relate to the mission. Module II covered how MS Society volunteers and staff at various levels work together to identify priorities and speak with one voice. Module III covered the process and key steps of effective advocacy. Module IV provided the tools you will need to be successful.

This module provides some valuable resources to help get your advocacy work started.

MS Society Contacts

MS Society of Canada National Office

Phone: 416-922-6065

Website: www.mssociety.ca/en/involved/advocacy/

Email: advocacy@mssociety.ca

To contact your division by phone call 1-800-268-7582

Websites:

British Columbia & Yukon www.mssociety.ca/bc/soact.htm

Alberta www.mssociety.ca/alberta/government.htm

Saskatchewan www.mssociety.ca/sask/

Manitoba www.mssociety.ca/manitoba/govrel.html

Ontario www.mssociety.ca/ontario/socact.htm

Quebec www.mssociety.ca/qc/

Atlantic www.mssociety.ca/atlantic/CSAdvocacy.htm

Government Websites

Government of Canada: <http://canada.gc.ca>
Parliament: www.parl.gc.ca

Provincial and Territorial Legislatures

Alberta	www.assembly.ab.ca
British Columbia	www.leg.bc.ca
Manitoba	www.gov.mb.ca/leg-asmb/
New Brunswick	www.gnb.ca/legis/
Newfoundland	www.assembly.nl.ca
Northwest Territories	www.assembly.gov.nt.ca
Nova Scotia	www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/
Nunavut	www.assembly.nu.ca/
Ontario	www.ontla.on.ca
Prince Edward Island	www.assembly.pe.ca/
Quebec	www.assnat.qc.ca/eng/index.html
Saskatchewan	www.legassembly.sk.ca
Yukon	www.legassembly.gov.yk.ca

Guide to the Canadian House of Commons

Guide to the Canadian Parliamentary system
www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/process/house/guide/index-e.asp

Accessibility Standards

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services
www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario

Other Advocacy Websites and Toolkits

The Kansas University Community Tool Box is a free online resource for information on essential skills for building healthy communities. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/>

Recommended Reading

Amanda Sussman – *The Art of the Possible*, McClelland and Stewart 2007

Glossary of Terms

Advocacy – Efforts designed to improve legislation, policies, practices, opportunities and/or attitudes within the non-governmental sector (businesses, corporations and other not-for-profits) that impact people affected by MS.

Coalition – A coalition is an alliance of organizations or people with similar concerns working together for the achievement of a common goal.

Elevator speech – Clear, concise and memorable summaries that identify; the issue(s) that you or others face, the action you are taking and what you need others to do.

Filler – Unnecessary words used during presentations that usually occur as the result of being nervous or unprepared. Examples: umm, so, like

Gatekeepers – People who are responsible for managing the access (of people and policy proposals) to decision makers or key influencers. The people in charge of answering phone calls, responding to emails and scheduling or following up meetings. Gatekeepers may be executive assistants, deputies, receptionists or political advisors.

Government relations – Efforts designed to improve legislation, policies, practices, opportunities and/or attitudes within the governmental sector and non-governmental sector that impact people affected by MS.

Jargon – Language, which is technical or specific to certain groups and is confusing to people who are unfamiliar with it.

Legislation – Refers to laws or sets of laws enacted by the specific parliamentary or legislative procedures of the federal or provincial governments.

Momentum 2015 – The current strategic plan for the MS Society of Canada; a collection of strategic directions or broad priorities the MS Society will pursue in order to achieve its mission.

Non-partisan – As a charity, the MS Society can take part in limited political activities but must remain non-partisan. That means the MS Society or its representatives must never support or oppose specific political parties.

Personal action – Advocacy or action at the local level on an issue of concern not identified as an MS Society priority. Individuals who choose to take personal action on an issue should not represent themselves as MS Society volunteers.

Social action – Another term for government relations, more commonly used by chapters.

Roles and Responsibilities

Political System	Regional / Municipal	Provincial / Territorial	Federal Government
	<p>Establish local/regional priorities, by-laws and programs</p> <p>Work with and provide input to provincial and federal governments as necessary</p> <p>Responsibilities include: public transit, emergency services, community access, social assistance</p>	<p>Establish provincial priorities, legislation and programs</p> <p>Work with and provide input to municipal and federal governments as necessary</p> <p>Responsibilities include: healthcare, transportation, community access, social assistance</p>	<p>Establish nation-wide priorities, legislation and programs</p> <p>Work with and gather input from provincial and municipal governments as necessary</p> <p>Responsibilities include: employment insurance, CPP-D, health research, drug approval, charitable law</p>
MS Society Key Priorities	Chapters/Units	Divisions	National
Income Security/	Establish chapter priorities and input to division	Establish division priorities/strategies with chapter input	Establish nation-wide priorities/strategies with division input
Caregiver Issues/	Advocate to local/municipal officials and policymakers	Advocate to provincial legislators and policymakers	Advocate to federal MPs and policymakers
Healthcare Access/	Develop and maintain local coalitions	Develop and maintain provincial coalitions	Develop and maintain national coalitions
Community Access	<p>Collect, use and analyze local data</p> <p>Support division/ nation-wide priorities including MP/ provincial legislator meetings as requested</p>	<p>Collect, use and analyze provincial data</p> <p>Support chapters as requested and nation-wide priorities including MP meetings as requested</p>	<p>Collect, use and analyze national data</p> <p>Support divisions as requested</p>
Research Funding	Support nation-wide/ division priorities including MP/ provincial legislator meetings as requested	Establish division priorities/strategies with chapter input	Establish nation-wide priorities/strategies with input from division
Charitable Sector	Provide input to division priority and national through division	<p>Advocate to provincial legislators and policymakers</p> <p>Develop and maintain coalitions</p> <p>Collect, use and analyze appropriate information and data</p> <p>Support nation-wide priorities, MP meetings as requested</p>	<p>Advocate with MPs and policymakers</p> <p>Develop and maintain coalitions</p> <p>Collect, use and analyze appropriate information and data</p> <p>Support divisions as requested</p>

Adapted from the MS Society of Canada Framework for Government Relations and Advocacy.

Mapping My Potential for Action

