

## Government 101

### Who is taking care of health

Before engaging the government, it is important to understand how the different levels of government work and what their focus or mandate is. This will help you decide who to target in your advocacy efforts:

- **Federal government**
  - MPs (Members of Parliament): Elected members that represent their constituency or riding in the House of Commons, and work to solve problems on a wide variety of federal matters including programs and policies. MPs review federal government department activities, and have direct influence on legislation
  - Federal Minister of Health: The Federal Minister of Health is an MP who is responsible to Parliament for health-related laws and associated regulations that govern the overall programs and policies of the Department of Health
- **Provincial or territorial governments**
  - MPPs (Members of Provincial Parliament): Elected provincial representatives in Ontario. MPPs represent their constituency or riding and work with the Provincial government to solve problems. MPPs also participate in the debating and making of laws
  - MNAs (Members of the National Assembly): Elected, provincial representatives in Quebec
  - MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly): Elected, provincial representatives in all other provinces
  - Provincial Minister of Health: The Provincial Minister of Health is an MPP, MNA or MLA who is responsible for administering the health care system and providing services through provincial programs

### **Federal Government**

Health Canada's role is to:

- Enhance and safeguard the health of Canadians
- Provide national leadership to develop health policy, enforce health regulations, promote disease prevention and enhance healthy living for all Canadians
- Ensure health services are available and accessible to First Nation and Inuit communities
- Work closely with other federal departments, agencies and stakeholders to reduce health and safety risks to Canadians

Health Canada is responsible for:

- New drug approvals and regulations
- Transfer payments to provincial governments
- Health promotion and prevention programs
- Research
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Overall disease area strategies

- In collaboration with Health Canada, The Public Health Agency of Canada is responsible for:
- Emergency preparedness and response
- Infectious and chronic disease prevention and control
- Injury prevention
- Health promotion

To learn more about Health Canada, visit <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>.

To learn more about the Public Health Agency of Canada, visit <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>.

### **Provincial Government**

Health care is a responsibility shared between Health Canada and its provincial and territorial partners. Health Canada's role with the provincial and territorial governments is to:

- Work in partnership to maintain a high-quality, affordable health care system
- Work together to test ways in which the Canadian health care system can be improved and to ensure it is sustainable
- Share the cost of health care and hospital services through the annual Canada Health and Social Transfer

The Ministry of Health\* in each of the provincial and territorial governments are responsible for:

- Delivery of health care services
- Running hospitals and cancer agencies
- Health promotion, prevention and diagnostic programs, including screening programs
- Drug formularies

\* In each province or territory across Canada the official name of the department may vary. Refer to the [contact information list](#) for the proper title in your province.

To learn more about the provincial and territorial governments, visit <http://canada.gc.ca/othergov-autregouv/prov-eng.html>

### **Who's who in government**

There are many key players in government that can help you raise your issues

- Elected officials, including Ministers of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors
- Political staff
- Civil servants / bureaucracy
- Appointees to agencies, boards and commissions
- The opposition, including the opposition health critics
- Press gallery

**Who to target**

- Understand which level of government (federal or provincial) is making decisions on the particular issue you would like to address.
- Be sure that there is either a local or personal connection when contacting a MP or MLA/MPP/MNA.
- Government officials are always changing. Get to know bureaucrats, representatives of other ministries, and members of the opposition since one day they may be the ones in power and controlling or influencing the MDS agenda.
- Remember, work with the governing party first, especially in a majority. However, the opposition may be useful to approach when the governing party is non-responsive to your issue.