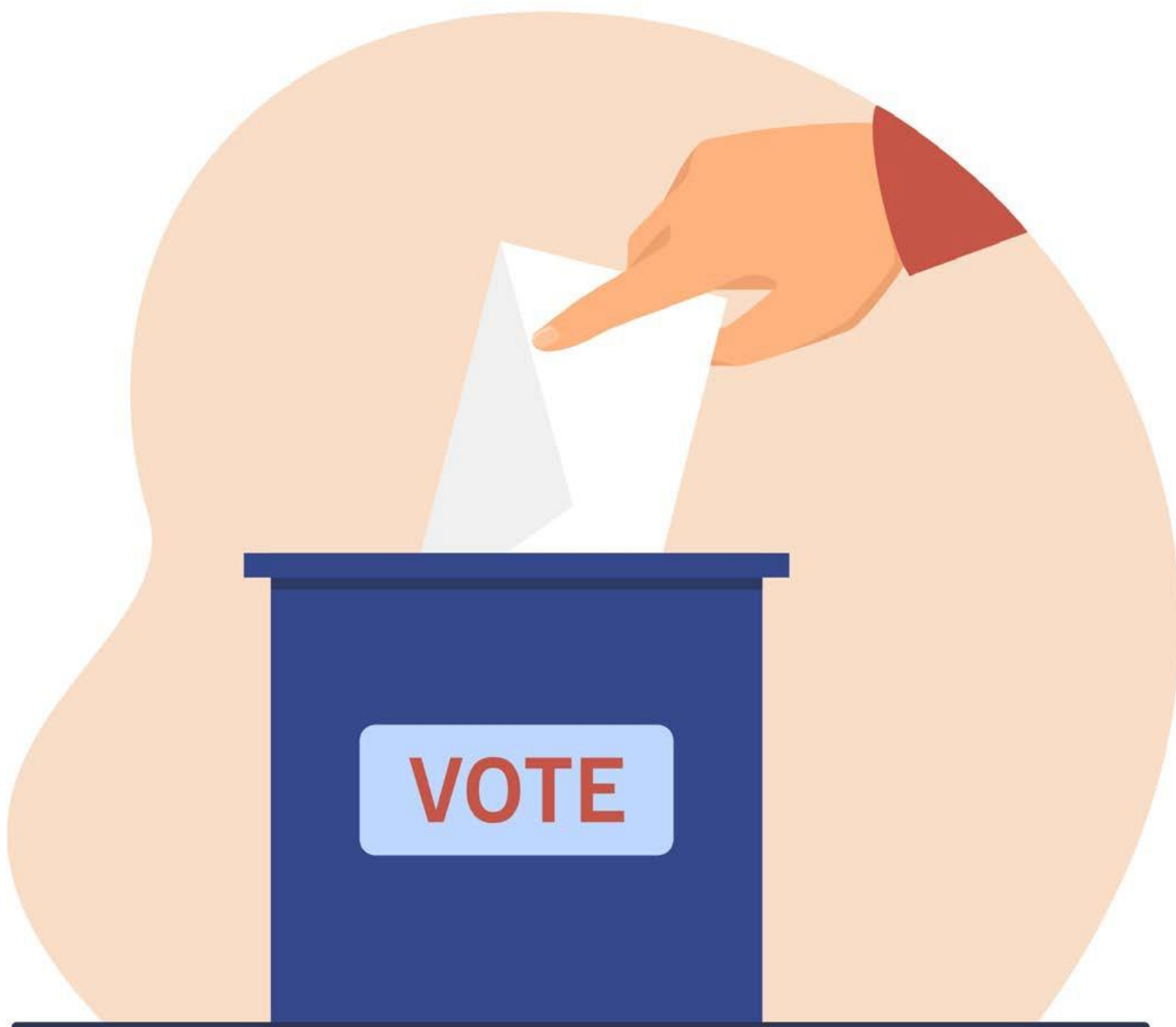


ALBERTA ELECTION TOOLKIT 2023



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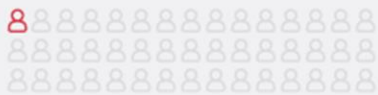
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There are over **10,000** people living with Parkinson's in Alberta.



The provincial average wait time to meet with a Parkinson's specialist was **one - two years** in 2018.



There is **one** Parkinson's specialist for every **735** people with Parkinson's in the province.



Nearly **50%** of care partners in Alberta feel they do not have sufficient access to information or resources.



43% of individuals with Parkinson's pay out of pocket for medication costs.

HELP MAKE PARKINSON'S AN ELECTION ISSUE

Let's make sure that every political party and candidate makes Parkinson's a priority!

Election time is the perfect opportunity to engage with political parties and candidates, raise awareness of issues important to you and in turn, enact change. This election period, we encourage our community to communicate with their candidates and make sure your voice is heard!

2023 ALBERTA ELECTION TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

Alberta is heading to the polls and in the lead up to this election we are asking the members of the Alberta Parkinson's community, to reach out to your electoral candidates and call on them to prioritize Parkinson's. It is time Alberta recognizes that the province's healthcare outcomes need improvement.

This toolkit provides you with a step-by-step guide on how to effectively engage with candidates, some key Parkinson's information and the current realities of healthcare in Alberta.



STEP 1:

Get Prepared

An overview of Parkinson's in Canada

Parkinson's disease has the fastest growing rates of death and disability compared to other neurological disorders such as dementias, MS, and stroke. It is estimated there are more than 100,000 people in Canada living with Parkinson's and that number will grow by about 30 people tomorrow and the day after, until we reach 50 new diagnoses per day within 10 years.

An overview of Parkinson's in Alberta

More than 10,000 of the 100,000 Canadians living with Parkinson's are in Alberta. The provincial average wait time to meet with a specialist is one to two years, and it is estimated that there is only one specialist for every 735 people living with Parkinson's in Alberta. Most specialists are in major cities and many Parkinson-specific services are centralized to urban regions posing geographical access barriers to residents in northern or rural areas.

Many people living with Parkinson's are required to pay out of pocket for critical healthcare services. It is estimated more than 43 per cent of individuals pay out of pocket for medication. Furthermore, more than 50 per cent of care partners in Alberta feel they do not have sufficient access to information or resources to properly care for the person with Parkinson's.

Let's make candidates aware of the urgency of improving healthcare outcomes for those affected by Parkinson's.

Parkinson Canada Advocacy Roundtables

The 2021 Parkinson Canada Roundtable Series (www.parkinson.ca/roundtable-reports) consisted of eight regional roundtables, including one in Alberta, and a national session. This effort brought together more than 150 voices from the Canadian Parkinson's community to gather understanding, insight, and clarity around healthcare realities and how to support Parkinson Canada's advocacy efforts. People living with Parkinson's, care partners, healthcare professionals, and regional Parkinson's organizations were invited to participate.

The Alberta Roundtable Report (accessible [here](#)) summarizes the unique realities faced by the Alberta Parkinson's community and identifies key priorities to better improve their overall health and quality of life.

Key Priorities Around Parkinson's Healthcare Realities in Alberta:

1) Wait Times:

- The prolonged wait times to see a Parkinson's specialist and receive a diagnosis (one to two-year average) have serious implications for an individual's quality of life and increase the likelihood for both physical and mental health deterioration. This can significantly impact the ability for people to continue to participate in work or other social and community life. It also increases the likelihood that a person will need to rely on disability or healthcare services and supports.

2) Model of Care:

- Integrated, high-quality health care includes a multidisciplinary, non-invasive approach involving mental health support, nutritional support, exercise/physiotherapy, and language or speech therapy that supports the whole person and improves the well-being of people living with Parkinson's.
- Currently, there is no consistent model of care in Alberta.

3) Access to Care:

- Most Parkinson's specialists are in major cities across Alberta. Similarly, many Parkinson-specific services are centralized to urban regions, posing geographical access barriers to residents in northern or rural areas.
- Many individuals also experience financial barriers to care, having to pay out-of-pocket in part for medication, speech therapy, physiotherapy, and exercise classes.

These priorities provided a roadmap in developing our advocacy work in supporting those in Alberta affected by Parkinson's.



STEP 2:

Identify your electoral candidates and other relevant voting information

To find your electoral district, candidates, voting locations, how to register, accessibility services available and more, please visit: <https://www.elections.ab.ca>



STEP 3:

Get Involved

Engage with your Candidates

Here are a few ways you can get involved and have your voice heard by candidates:

1. Visit www.parkinson.ca/election for further information and send a letter directly to your electoral candidates.
2. Connect with your candidate through social media (don't forget to tag them!), and use the **#PrioritizePD** hashtag. See some examples below.
3. Meet with your candidates in-person, virtually, or by phone to share your message.
4. Write a letter or email to your electoral candidate. See templates and letter writing tips below.
5. Follow your candidate on social media and subscribe to their newsletters to familiarize yourself with their activities and priorities.

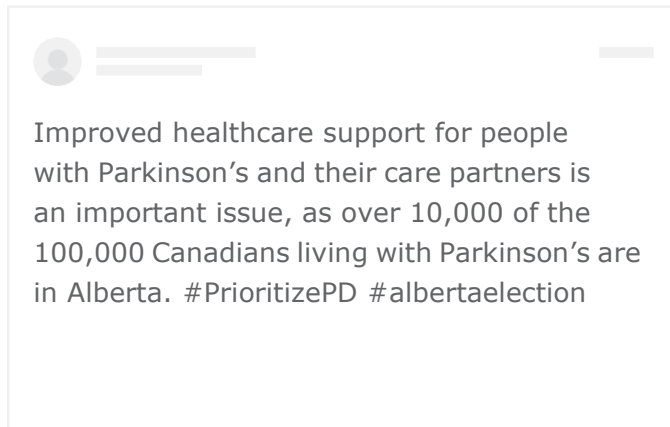
Strategic Asks for your Candidates

The objective of the meetings is to build a relationship with the candidate while raising awareness about Parkinson's and to find areas of shared priorities.

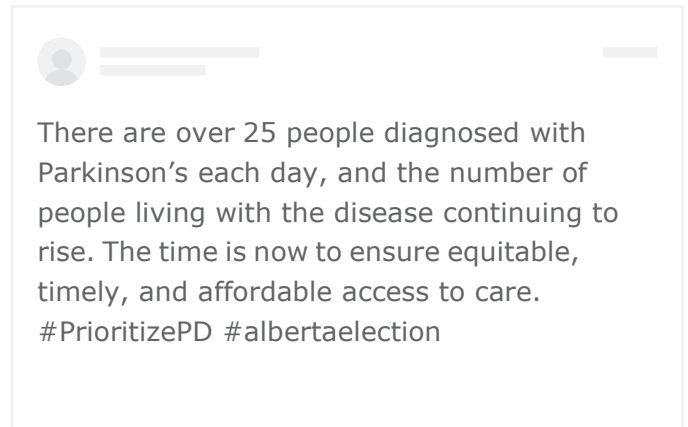
1. Request that the candidate show their support for what you have discussed by sharing a message on social media emphasizing the importance of improving healthcare for those living with Parkinson's in Alberta, using the **#PrioritizePD** hashtag.
2. Ask the candidate to learn more about Parkinson's. A great place for them to start is our website www.parkinson.ca or by emailing advocacy@parkinson.ca.
3. Request that the candidate share what they have learned around the need for improved healthcare outcomes for those with Parkinson's with their party and in government.
4. Ask what their top priorities will be if elected and how Parkinson Canada and you, as a constituent, can help them accomplish these.
5. Ask what measures their party intends to take for people in Alberta to have equitable access to care across the province.
6. Ask how their party intends to improve specialist wait times in Alberta.

SOCIAL MEDIA POST EXAMPLES

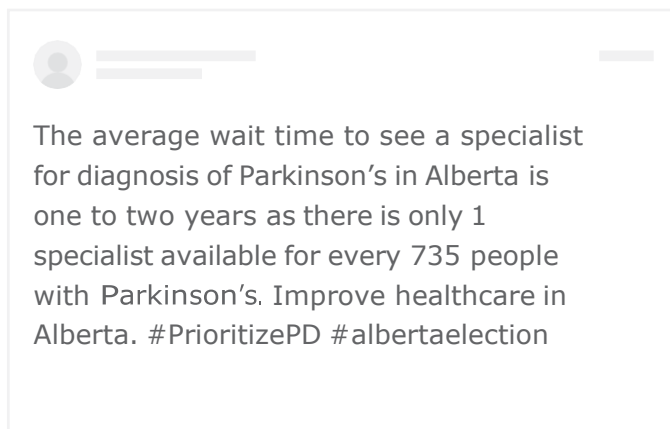
Facebook and LinkedIn



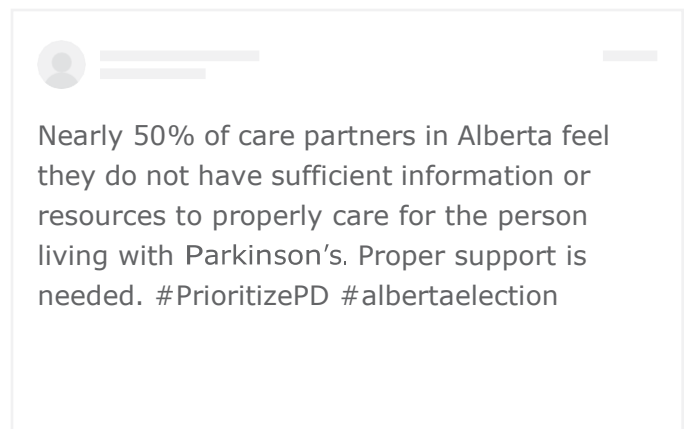
Improved healthcare support for people with Parkinson's and their care partners is an important issue, as over 10,000 of the 100,000 Canadians living with Parkinson's are in Alberta. #PrioritizePD #albertaelection



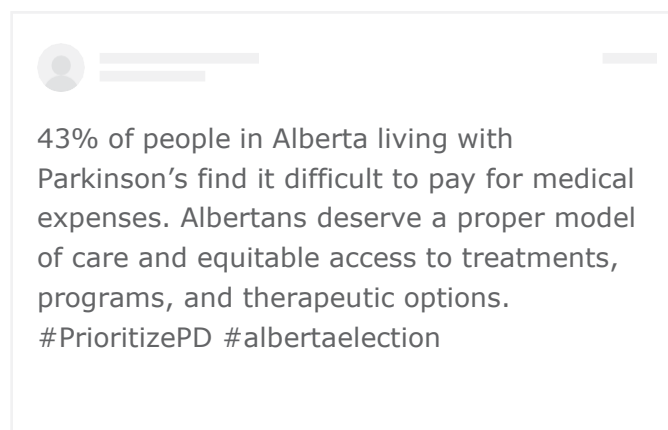
There are over 25 people diagnosed with Parkinson's each day, and the number of people living with the disease continuing to rise. The time is now to ensure equitable, timely, and affordable access to care. #PrioritizePD #albertaelection



The average wait time to see a specialist for diagnosis of Parkinson's in Alberta is one to two years as there is only 1 specialist available for every 735 people with Parkinson's. Improve healthcare in Alberta. #PrioritizePD #albertaelection

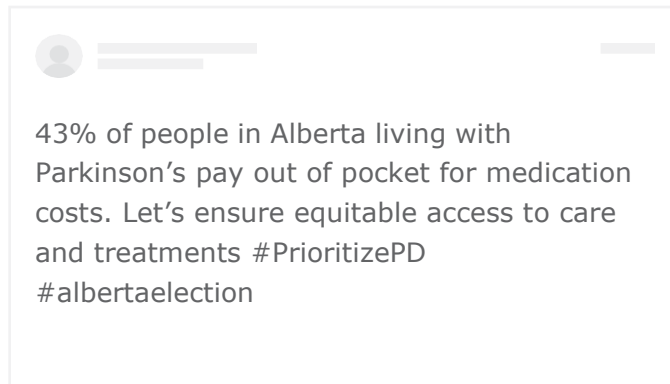
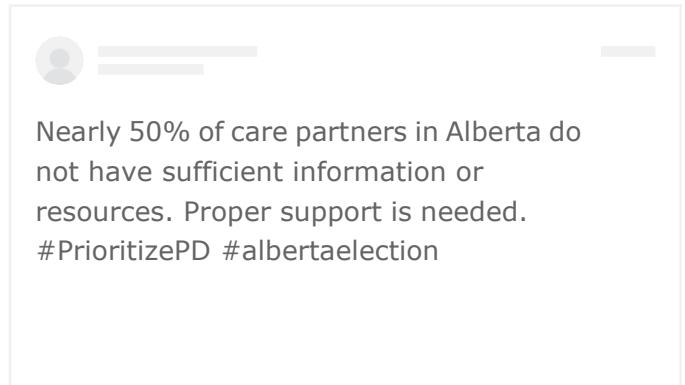
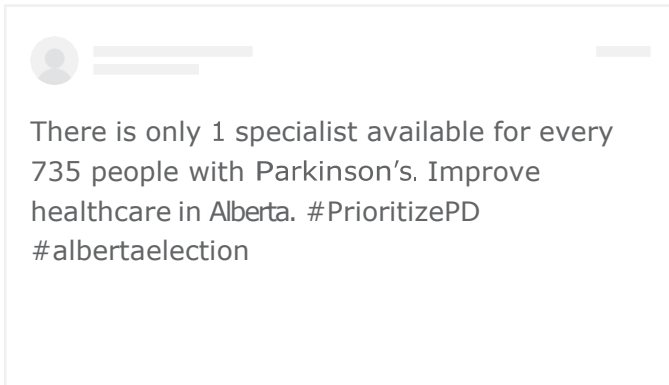
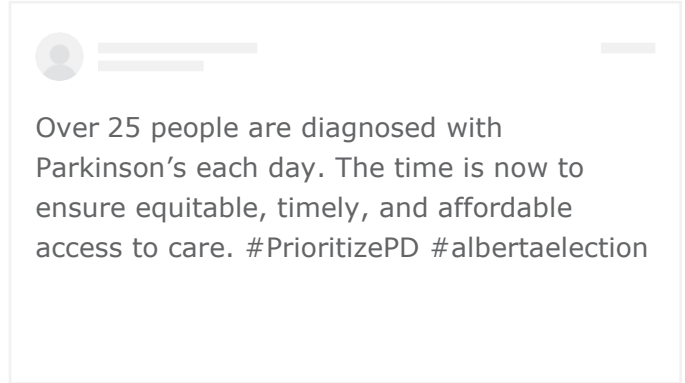
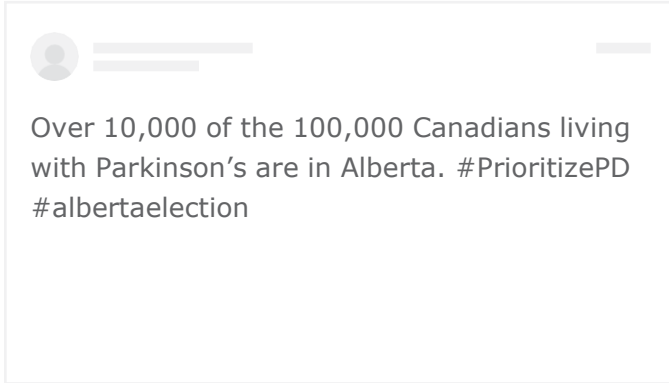


Nearly 50% of care partners in Alberta feel they do not have sufficient information or resources to properly care for the person living with Parkinson's. Proper support is needed. #PrioritizePD #albertaelection



43% of people in Alberta living with Parkinson's find it difficult to pay for medical expenses. Albertans deserve a proper model of care and equitable access to treatments, programs, and therapeutic options. #PrioritizePD #albertaelection

Twitter and Instagram Stories



Considerations When Interacting with Your Candidates

1. Candidates are very busy during elections as they are meeting with as many constituents as possible. Depending on their campaign schedule candidates may or may not be able to take a one-to-one meeting. If your candidate agrees to a meeting, be prepared and expect to have no more than 15-30 minutes with the candidate.
2. Meetings are not the only way to get time with a candidate. Check the news or the candidates' website for local events they will be attending. Local events can be a great opportunity for you to introduce yourself and briefly share your issues and concerns. Remember to be prepared and concise with what you want to say. Sign up for their local newsletters to receive updates on their activities.
3. As a charitable organization, Parkinson Canada is nonpartisan. This means that we engage with all parties and their candidates without bias. When advocating on our behalf, please refrain from showing support or favour for one party over another.

Template Agenda for Meeting with Candidates

1. Introductions

- Share your connection to Parkinson's.
- Ask if they have a connection to Parkinson's.

2. Parkinson's in Alberta and request

- Share key information and data on Parkinson's by highlighting some main points.
- Request their commitment, if elected, to make Parkinson's a priority to ensure that improved healthcare is seen as important.
- Make it personal by providing your main points on why this is important as it relates to your personal experience.

3. Questions to ask your candidates

- How do you and your party intend to improve the lives of Albertans living with Parkinson's?
- Can I count on you, if elected, to make Parkinson's a priority?
- Will you share this support publicly by posting on social media with the #PrioritizePD hashtag?

4. Thank them for their time and let them know you will follow up!

Don't forget to let us know how your meeting went at advocacy@parkinson.ca

Sample Emails to Candidates

1. Use this email template for meeting requests:

Dear first and last name,

My name is _____. I am a resident in the riding of _____, for which you are seeking election. I have been [living with Parkinson's disease for X years/month/caring for my__ with Parkinson's for X years/months]. During this time, I have experienced [add personal challenges with accessing care/services].

As a supporter of the Parkinson's community and in partnership with Parkinson Canada, I am requesting to meet with you to discuss the need to make Parkinson's a priority and commit, if elected, to improving healthcare for Albertans in the Parkinson's community.

Thank you in advance for your response. I look forward to meeting with you.

[Signed]

[Your Address]

2. Use this email template if you are unable to meet with your candidate but would like to share your story and requests with them:

Dear first and last name,

My name is _____. I am a resident in the riding of _____, for which you are seeking election. I have been [living with Parkinson's disease for X years/month/caring for my_____ with Parkinson's for X years/months].

During this time, I have experienced [add personal challenges with accessing care/services].

As a supporter of the Parkinson's community and in partnership with Parkinson Canada, I want to bring your attention to the urgent need to make Parkinson's a priority and seek your commitment, if elected, to improving healthcare for the Parkinson's community.

I would like you to consider the following questions:

How do you intend, if elected, to improve the lives of Albertans living with Parkinson's?

What measures does your party intend to take for Albertans to have equitable access to care across the province?

How does your party intend to improve specialist wait times in Alberta?

Can I count on you to commit to making Parkinson's a priority?

Will you write a letter to your party leadership requesting their commitment to make Parkinson's a a healthcare priority?

What advice or feedback do you have for us to have our request for improved healthcare move forward?

Thank you in advance for your response.

[Signed]

[Your Address]

Tips for Writing an Effective Letter and Emails to Candidates

Address your letter correctly. Be sure you have the correct address and salutation in your letter.

Only address one issue per letter. Being concise on one specific topic will make for a quicker and more impactful ask and response.

Be accurate. Beware of false or misleading information. Always double-check if you are not sure!

Make a specific ask. Make sure to ask your candidate to act. Whether it is asking for a meeting, a phone call, or their support for your issue; always ask for their position on the issue you are addressing.

Make it personal. Share your story and how it affects you. Tie in your own experience and expertise using your own words.

Be polite and courteous. Rudeness or aggressiveness is sure to alienate the reader.

Be concise. Keep your letter as short as possible to ensure that your message is fully read. For letters, it should be no longer than one typed page. If sending an email, no more than 3-5 paragraphs is ideal.

Include your return address in your letter. Even in an email, always include your address so that the candidate knows that you live in the riding for which they are seeking election. Make sure your candidate knows how to reach you and include your phone number if you are comfortable.

Express appreciation. Thank them for their time and consideration and add a note about another initiative that they may have taken part in to show that you are following their activities.

Follow up. Candidates are busy and it may take weeks to respond. Follow up via phone or email to confirm that they received your letter if you have not received a timely response. When you do receive a response, send a follow-up thank-you letter and ask follow-up questions if their response has not addressed your questions or concerns. Follow-up letters often have a much larger impact than the initial communication as the candidate will recognize the importance of the issue to you.

ABOUT PARKINSON CANADA

People with Parkinson's are at the centre of everything we do. Our mission is to transform the lives of people living with Parkinson's.

Parkinson Canada funds critical research, provides information and support, increases awareness, and advocates for improved health care outcomes for people living with Parkinson's across Canada.

<https://www.parkinson.ca/>

