

MPP Summer & Fall Engagement Toolkit

MPP Summer & Fall Engagement Kit

Summer & Fall Events

With the Ontario Legislature now in recess until October, this summer/fall is an excellent opportunity to connect with Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs). MPPs are often more accessible during this time and engaged in local community activities, such as barbecues and fall fairs, making it easier to build personal relationships in a less formal setting.

This guide outlines the steps to help agencies identify MPPs' summer events and effectively connect with them through these engagements.

Note: Please don't stop at attending events organized by MPPs. If you're holding your own events over the summer/fall be sure to invite your MPP. In addition, while this kit is aimed at specifically MPPs, you can also use it as a guide with minor modification to engage Members of Parliament (MPs) and local municipal councilors over the summer/fall as well.

Participation in these types of summer/fall events is crucial for conveying the Sector's priorities and your specific needs from a local perspective, ensuring that our concerns remain prominent and top of mind with MPPs throughout the year. It further underscores that the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and the agencies supporting them remain critical local issues.

Key Messages: These are meant as a guide for your engagement with candidates. Do not feel the need to include everything. Be sure to summarise and add your own local experience and individual pressures and challenges.

Challenges Faced by the Developmental Services (DS) Sector

- The DS sector is experiencing a significant labour shortage, with low wages and limited training incentives. Developmental Services Workers (DSWs) often leave for better-paying roles in hospitals, schools, and other public sectors, resulting in a shortage of qualified staff to support people with developmental disabilities.
- Increased numbers of people are entering the system with complex needs, including health and mental health challenges, putting immense strain on service providers with already limited resources.
- More than 52,000 adults with developmental disabilities in Ontario are on waitlists for critical services and supportive housing. For many, this means waiting indefinitely for the services they need to live healthy, supported, and safe lives. For families, the wait is not just a number. It represents lost opportunities for early intervention, essential support, and community inclusion.
- 30 years of chronic under funding and the current funding model has left service agencies struggling to meet demand, leading to program closures and staff shortages.
- The lack of necessary financial support places organizations and staff at risk and ultimately creates the possibility of fewer, and lower quality, services and support for people living with developmental disabilities in Ontario.
- In addition, the housing crisis has left tens of thousands without appropriate housing. People are often forced into inappropriate settings such as hospitals and long-term care facilities, which are both costly and unsuitable.

Funding History

- We appreciate that in 2024 a portion of the \$310 million outlined in the budget, equaled an approximate 3% increase for Developmental Services (DS) agency base budgets. This is a positive step toward supporting the sector.
- However, this investment means that over the past three decades, developmental service organizations have received cumulative base funding increases of less than 7%, though the cost of living, as marked by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), has increased nearly 70%.
- While any additional resources allocated to the DS Sector are always appreciated, the lack of necessary support places organizations and staff at risk and ultimately creates the possibility of fewer, and lower quality, services and supports for people living with developmental disabilities in Ontario.

Finding Your Local MPP and Their Events:

If you don't know your MPP's name or your Riding / Electoral district, to find the most up-to-date information, please enter the postal code of your organisation on the Elections Ontario website, found here: [https://voterinformationsevice.elections.on.ca/en/election/search?mode=postal Code](https://voterinformationsevice.elections.on.ca/en/election/search?mode=postal+Code) and it will tell you the name of your Member of Provincial Parliament and their contact details. Again, please remember to enter the postal code of your organisation.

MPP SUMMER ENGAGEMENT: Telling Your Story to Build Relationships and Understanding

Your voice is vital! Local agencies provide a compelling, community-focused context that resonates with MPPs from across the province. We want developmental services agencies in every community to connect with their local MPPs – whether PC, NDP, Liberal, Green, or independent.

Again, attending and participating in local summer events, such as barbecues and community fairs, offers a unique opportunity to engage with your MPPs in a relaxed and informal setting. There is no better time to establish or strengthen relationships with your local representatives and to advocate for the key issues important to our sector.

Step 1: Planning Your Engagement at Summer Events

Identify Local Events:

- Provided Chart - Use the linked chart mentioned in the previous section to find your MPPs Upcoming Events webpage.
- Search Local Events - Be sure to also look for other local community barbecues, fairs, and festivals where local MPPs are likely to attend. Be sure to find out if you need to pre-register for any events.
- Engage Social Media - Utilize social media, community boards, and local newspapers to find event details.
- Template Letter - If you invite an MPP to your event, be sure to do so as soon as possible (a Template Invite Letter is included in this kit). MPPs calendars fill up quickly all year but especially in the summer. To ensure an MPPs attendance but be sure to invite them as soon as you start planning your event. If there is an opportunity for them to speak at your event, be sure to mention that.

Preparing Your Approach:

- Given that these will likely be much larger events with many people present and all trying to highlight their own issues, you may have even less one-on-one time than you would in a formal meeting, sometimes as little as 2 minutes.
- It is important to remain focused and informal in your discussions.
- Use the enclosed messaging and your own local personal examples to illustrate the Sector's priorities as well as your local impact and examples.
- Summarize the most important message that you can get across quickly and keep this in mind when attending events.
- Remember to keep it short; you likely won't have the ability to refer to notes during the event.

Print a Leave Behind Document:

- With limited time to speak with your MPP, it is helpful to have a document that you can leave with them. This document reiterates the information you shared with them and may provide additional information
- Print this two-page resource by clicking the link below
- [PRINT THIS](#)

Step 2: Engaging at the Event

Be Early and Be Prepared:

- We suggest that, if possible, you arrive at the event early and confirm that you know exactly where and what time the event is.
- Arriving early means there will likely be fewer people there and increases your opportunity to connect directly with the MPP or their staff.

Introduce Yourself:

- Briefly introduce yourself and your role within your agency.
- If there is time, engage in casual conversation before delving into the key points that you'd like to get across.

Communicate Effectively:

- Focus on key messages and local examples. Suggest that you keep the conversation short.
- Be passionate but respectful, and tailor your conversation to fit the informal setting of the event.

Be Concise and Polite:

- Again, given the informal setting, you never know how long you will have to speak with the MPP. Keep your discussions concise and to the point.
- Be prepared to answer questions and provide additional information as best you can.

Gather Feedback:

- Given that it's unlikely that you'll have notes with you, take note of any feedback or questions from the MPP.
- If you are unable to answer any questions, let them know you will get back to them.

Step 3: Following up after the Event

Connect with Us:

- Using [THIS FORM](#), please inform OASIS and Community Living Ontario about the event you attended, your interaction with the MPP, any questions asked, and feedback received.

Send a Thank You Note and Provide Additional Information:

- If you attend an MPP's event, send a thank you note, expressing your appreciation for hosting and if you were able to engage with them, thanking them for their time and interest. If they attended your event, thank them for attending, etc.
- Remind them of what you discussed.
- If needed, include any promised follow-up information in your email. If you need additional time to gather the information requested, be sure to mention that in the follow-up email.

Partnering with Self-Advocates

Self-advocates are experts in their own lives and bring powerful, personal perspectives to advocacy efforts. Their voices help MPPs understand the real-life impact of policies and funding decisions. Agencies are encouraged to actively involve self-advocates in all stages of summer and fall engagement—from planning and preparation to attending events and sharing stories.

Tips for Agencies:

- Share this toolkit: Share this information with not just employees, but also with self-advocates.
- Build relationships: Find out who the self-advocates are within your agency. There may be formalized groups or passionate individuals.
- Listen for themes: Self-advocates can tell you what challenges they are facing which can help you prioritize your advocacy efforts.
- Choose to Partner: If self-advocates initiate connections with MPPs and invite your agency to join the conversation, say yes and choose to partner with them.
- Invite Early: Reach out to self-advocates early in your planning process. Ask how they'd like to be involved and what support they may need.
- Use Plain Language: Explain the purpose of the event, who MPPs are, and why their voice matters.
- Offer Choices: Some self-advocates may want to speak directly to MPPs, while others may prefer to write a message, create artwork, or attend as a supporter.
- Support Accessibility: Ensure transportation, communication supports, and accessibility at the event.
- Celebrate Contributions: Acknowledge and thank self-advocates for their participation. Their involvement is essential.

Sample Questions to Guide Conversations:

- “What’s something you wish your MPP knew about your life?”
- “What support has helped you the most?”
- “What would make your community more inclusive?”
- “What barriers/challenges do you face most often?”

Encourage Social Media Advocacy

Self-advocates can also raise awareness by sharing their experiences on social media. Encourage people to post photos, quotes, or reflections from events using hashtags like #SelfAdvocate, #ONPoli, or #CDNPoli.

- Encourage self-advocates to tag their friends to spread the word in their communities.
- Agencies can help share stories from self-advocates on their social media channels to help amplify their voices.

These posts amplify their voices and show the broader community that people with disabilities are leading change. By creating space for self-advocates to lead, speak, and participate, we strengthen our collective voice and ensure that advocacy is rooted in lived experience.

Thank you to the Our Voices Matter Council for your contribution to this resource. [karis.org/OurVoicesMatter]

Event Invitation, Template

This is a sample request email that you can send to your local MPP if you would like them to attend your local event, while clearly outlining the purpose and importance of their attendance. Please remember to remove all italicized placeholders and replace them with the appropriate information.

[MONTH] XX, 2025
[Mr./Ms.] [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
MPP, [Riding Name]
Via email: [EMAIL]

Dear [Mr./Ms.] [LAST NAME],

On behalf of [Insert local agency], I am pleased to invite you to attend our upcoming event on [specific topic or theme of the event] on [Event Date]. The event will be held at [Event Location] in [City/Town.]. This event aims to highlight the vital work being done in the developmental services (DS) sector to support individuals with developmental disabilities in our community.

Event Details:

Date: [Event Date]
Time: [Event Start Time] to [Event End Time]
Location: [Event Location], [Event Address]

During the event, you will have the opportunity to meet with individuals and families who benefit from our services, hear firsthand about the challenges they face, and learn more about the critical issues impacting the DS sector. Your presence and insights would be incredibly valuable to us as we continue our efforts to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities receive the necessary supports and care in [Electoral district or community].

About [Local Member Agency]: [Insert brief description of the agency, its mission, services provided, and any notable achievements or initiatives.]

We hope that you can join us for this important occasion. Your participation would greatly enrich the event and underscore your commitment to supporting the developmental services sector in our community. [If there is an opportunity for the MPP to speak, mention it here]

To confirm your attendance or if you have any questions, please contact us at [contact details]. We are looking forward to your positive response and will follow up to confirm the details.

Thank you for considering our invitation. We look forward to the opportunity to welcome you to our event.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]
[Your Title]
[Your Contact Information including phone number and email address]
[Local Member Agency Name]

Thank you, Letter Template

This is a sample thank you email that you can send to the MPP following an event – please remember to remove all italicized placeholders and replace them with the appropriate information.

[MONTH] XX, 2025

[Mr./Ms.] [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]

MPP, [Riding Name]

Via email: [EMAIL]

Dear *[Mr./Ms.] [LAST NAME]*,

On behalf of *[Insert local agency]*, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks for *[hosting/attending]* the *[event name]* on *[event date]*. Your *[engagement/participation]* was highly valued and made a significant impact.

We are grateful for your time and the insights you shared during the *[event]*. Your commitment to supporting the Developmental Services Sector's priorities is greatly appreciated. *[Reiterate any relevant commitment of support and speak to others in their respective party]*. Your *[input/feedback]* on *[specific issue discussed]* was invaluable, and we are optimistic about the potential positive outcomes for individuals living with developmental disabilities and their families in *[electoral district or community]* and across Ontario.

[Provide answers to any questions they raised that you committed to following up on; Or, if you need more time to gather the information, say you will get back to them as soon as possible on the topic].

We look forward to continuing our dialogue and working together towards a sustainable future for developmental services. If you have any further questions or require additional information, please feel free to reach out to me at *[your email address]*.

Thank you once again for your support and collaboration.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Contact Information including phone number and email address]

[Local Member Agency Name]

Social Media

We encourage all agencies who attend an event over the summer to post to social media immediately following. Once you've attended an event, please try and get pictures with your MPP and post with social media. Remember to include the @ sign ahead of the username/handle and if the MPP doesn't have a social media username, use #MPP and their name. The posts below are just suggestions. Please feel free to adjust the text to better suit your agency's tone and the specific event details or create your own original post.

Facebook

Post 1: Exciting Summer Event

  [Agency Name] had an amazing time at the [Event Name]! It was wonderful to connect with our community, share our mission, and enjoy the summer festivities. We were thrilled to chat with [MPP Name], discussing key issues facing developmental services.

Post 2: Productive Discussions

  A big thank you to [MPP Name] for engaging in such a productive conversation at [Event Name]. [Agency Name] is committed to advocating for enhanced developmental services and ensuring our community receives the support it needs.

Post 3: Your Event

  [Agency Name] had a fantastic time at the [Event Name]! [MPP Name] attending was a highlight, as we discussed how to better serve individuals with developmental needs in our community. Thank you to everyone who came out and supported us!

Twitter

Tweet 1:

  [Agency Name] enjoyed a fantastic time at [Event Name] and had an insightful discussion with [MPP Name] about enhancing developmental services.

Tweet 2:

 [Agency Name] is Grateful to [MPP Name] for the engaging chat at [Event Name]. We're working towards better developmental services for all.

Tweet 3:

 Great times at [Event Name] with [Agency Name] and [MPP Name]! Discussed key issues affecting developmental services.

Instagram

Post 1: Summer Event Highlights

[Image of the event with agency members and the MPP]

Caption:   What a day at [Event Name]! [Agency Name] was delighted to connect with [MPP Name] discuss our shared goals for improving developmental services.

Post 2: Advocacy in Action!

[Image of agency representatives with the MPP]

Caption:   A huge shoutout to [MPP Name] for the meaningful discussion at [Event Name]. [Agency Name] is dedicated to advocating for better support and services for individuals with developmental needs.

Post 3: Community Celebration

[Image of event activities]

Caption:   Celebrating community spirit at [Event Name]! [Agency Name] had the pleasure of speaking with [MPP Name] about the future of developmental services.

LinkedIn

Post 1: Event Engagement

  [Agency Name] had a productive and enjoyable day at [Event Name]! We had the pleasure of engaging with [MPP Name], discussing our ongoing initiatives and the importance of developmental services.

Post 2: Advocacy Efforts

  [Agency Name] was honoured to converse with [MPP Name] during [Event Name]. Our discussion centred around enhancing developmental services and ensuring support for our community. Looking forward to continued collaboration.

Post 3: Celebrating Community

  [Agency Name] was thrilled to be a part of [Event Name]! It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with community members and discuss developmental services with [MPP Name].

Hashtags:

Please tag your local MPP in a social media post with the following hashtags. Please add your own hashtags, or hashtags for specific events, as needed. Please ensure to use [#WaitingToBelong](#).

If you want to be more political, you can also use the [#ONPOLI](#) and [#CDNPoli](#) hashtags. These are the hashtags that cover all politics in Ontario & Canada.

Follow Up and Event Tracking:

As mentioned previously, following any event attended it is important to report back to Community Living Ontario and OASIS about the event you attended, your interaction with the MPP, any questions asked, and feedback received.

Filling out the event tracker helps maintain a record of agency involvement in these summer events and records interactions with MPPs so that we know who and when they were contacted so we can refer to it in future. All of this is crucial for improving our messaging and advocacy to help achieve better outcomes for the developmental services sector.

The Event Tracker, or Summer Engagement Events Information Request, can be found: [HERE](#)

The Event Tracker Includes:

- Name
- Title
- Organisation
- Email
- Phone Number
- Event Details including Date.
- Request for Information on any discussion with the MPP, Questions Asked and Feedback Received:
- Any other Relevant Information; and
- Are you a member of OASIS, Community Living Ontario, Both or Neither

Appendix

[Understanding the Funding Gap- Summer & Fall Advocacy Toolkit Messaging from Karis](#)