



ALIGN

Association of Community Services

Political Toolkit

Election 2019

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WE ADDRESS **significant social issues that affect all Albertans.**

We are not one - we are many.

Our member organizations provide services to vulnerable children and families in communities across Alberta.

120 Our network is over 120 agencies strong.

10,000 Our network employs over 10,000 staff.

200,000 Together, each year, we provide services to over 200,000 children and families.

We look to our communities and elected officials to advocate for the work we do and keep it in the forefront of public policy.

We are experienced.

After 50 years as a catalyst for advancement in this sector, ALIGN is a respected source of knowledge and history about child and family services issues.

50 In this professional field of practice, members look to ALIGN to offer leadership and training that builds front-line best practice and advances skills in executive leadership. ALIGN continually works with academic leaders and international experts to bring members innovative and impactful opportunities for capacity building.

We are part of the fabric of the communities we serve.

We work collaboratively.

ALIGN has a reputation for collaborating with government, academia and other professional practice organizations. ALIGN is frequently asked to represent the voices of children, families, and member organizations during policy, practice, and legislative discussions.

We have welcomed the voice and leadership of the Indigenous community to collectively strengthen and implement services that promote positive, and healthy outcomes for clients. Our member's programs and services, respect history and respond to many of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We get results.

ALIGN members hold approximately 80% of the Alberta Government contracts for front line child intervention services. Additionally, our members are contracted to provide family support for children with disabilities, early intervention programs and programs for prevention of family violence. Organizations are selected for these contracts because they consistently **deliver high quality services at a competitive cost.**

Our membership provides strong leadership that is flexible and responsive to the changing landscape of life in Alberta. Proven business models, a focus on efficiency, professionalism, and a passion for our work enables members to achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable Albertans during good times and bad.

WE ARE ASKING YOU **to talk to your colleagues about Alberta's social needs and** **advocate for sustainable community services.**

QUICK LOOK: Alberta's Electoral Landscape

Who is Eligible to Vote?

To vote in the 2019 Alberta election an individual must be:

- A Canadian citizen
- At least 18 years of age
- Ordinarily resident in Alberta

Voter registration is currently underway. Eligible individuals may register online or by phone before October 5, 2018 or face to face with an Enumerator who visits door to door before September 30, 2018.

Authorized identification is required to register and to vote at a polling station. A complete list of authorized identification is available from [Elections Alberta](http://www.elections.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/Authorized-Identification-Poster.pdf).
www.elections.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/Authorized-Identification-Poster.pdf

Electoral District Boundaries

The Electoral District (ED) boundaries for the 2019 election will be changing. They will come into effect once Writs for the next Provincial General Election are issued.

Maps of the [current ED boundaries](#) and maps of the [new 2019 ED boundaries](#), are available from [Elections Alberta](#).
www.elections.ab.ca/resources/

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)

Information on current MLAs is available in two locations:

[Legislative Assembly of Alberta](#) provides a complete listing of all current MLAs. You need to know the name of your riding or the name of the MLA to search.
https://www.assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=mla_home

Alberta's Political Parties

The following is a list of the ten political parties currently registered in Alberta. Please note, this information was current at the time of publication. For the most up to date information, visit [Elections Alberta](#).
www.elections.ab.ca/parties-and-candidates

[Alberta Liberal Party](#): www.albertaliberal.com

[Alberta New Democratic Party](#): www.albertandp.ca

[Alberta Party](#): www.albertaparty.ca

[Communist Party - Alberta](#): www.comunistparty-alberta.ca

[Freedom Conservative Party of Alberta](#) (no website)

[Green Party of Alberta](#): [www.greenpar\(yof\)alberta.ca](http://www.greenpar(yof)alberta.ca)

[Pro-Life Alberta Political Association](#) (no website)

[Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta](#):
www.unitedconservative.ca

[United Conservative Party](#): www.unitedconservative.ca

[Wildrose Party](#): www.unitedconservative.ca

[Elections Alberta](#) provides a search tool based on street addresses. Follow the format instructions on the website and it will return the name and current electoral district of the appropriate MLA.
www.elections.ab.ca/voters/whos-my-mla/

ADVOCACY: Three Reasons to Get Involved

2018 | 2019

In the Spring of 2019, Albertans will go to the polls to participate in a critical election that will determine future policy directions in many key areas. One of these areas will be the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families; those who require specialized services to grow, thrive and participate in the community and economy. It is an important time to ensure that Albertans – both political candidates and voters, understand the value and essential nature of the services ALIGN members provide.

Allan Northcott, President of the Max Bell Foundation in Canada, authored a guest editorial for *The Philanthropist*, 2014. Volume 25.4. In his look at the role of Canadian charities in developing public policy, he highlights the following three good reasons to get involved. Their simplicity is quite stunning in-the-midst of a web of scary rules that often frighten registered charities away.

Reason ONE

“Many Canadian nonprofits and charities are elemental expressions of citizen aspirations to participate in collectively caring for each other and governing ourselves. As such, they (charities and nonprofits) are an important platform for engagement between citizens and the elected officials and public servants who act on their behalf.”

Reason TWO

“The second argument is that charities often have good policy advice to give. It is expressed very well in [Canada Revenue Policy Statement on Political Activities \(CPS-022\):2](#). Through their dedicated delivery of essential programs, many charities have acquired a wealth of knowledge about how government policies affect people’s lives. Charities are well placed to study, assess, and comment on those government policies. Canadians benefit from the efforts of charities and the practical, innovative ways they use to resolve complex issues related to delivering social services. Beyond service delivery, their expertise is also a vital source of information for governments to help guide policy decisions. It is therefore essential that charities continue to offer their direct knowledge of social issues to public policy debates.”

Reason THREE

“The third argument is that governments need good advice. Much has been written about the diminishing capacity of governments in Canada, whether municipal, provincial, or federal, to do the kind of policy development necessary to respond to the challenges they face. At the same time as their resources are shrinking, governments are facing heightened scrutiny and expectations from an electorate that itself is increasingly diverse. Canadian charities can help in a range of ways, including bringing front line knowledge to bear, convening stakeholders, facilitating and informing dialogue, delivering and assessing demonstrations and pilots, and providing neutral spaces for engagement.”

As an ALIGN member agency, the coming months offer an opportunity for you to increase your profile. Help your community - clients, colleagues and politicians learn more about who you are and what you do. Give everyone the opportunity to be knowledgeable about the human services sector and to make informed decisions.

ADVOCACY: Resources to Guide the Way

2018 | 2019

A majority, of charities feel uncertain about the boundaries, rules, regulations, perceptions and work associated with actively participating in activities that may be interpreted as “political” by the Canada Revenue Agency. Many resources have been developed to help guide the way to successful and appropriate participation. The following is a list of highly reputable resources that will answer your questions about what you can and cannot do during an election period.

Canada Revenue Agency

Policy Statement CPS – 022

Effective Date: September 2, 2003

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/policies-guidance/policy-statement-022-political-activities.html>

This policy is still current. However, on August 15, 2018 the Government of Canada announced it is reviewing legislation and policies with respect to the political activities of registered charities.

Read the announcement

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/news/2018/08/statement-by-the-minister-of-national-revenue-and-minister-of-finance-on-the-governments-commitment-to-clarifying-the-rules-governing-the-political.html>

Political Activities Self-Assessment Tool

This **self-assessment tool** will help you determine quickly whether the way your charity uses its resources for political activities is likely to concerns with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/resources-charities-donors/resources-charities-about-political-activities/political-activities-self-assessment-tool.html>

Political Activities Basic Requirements (Fact Sheet)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/resources-charities-donors/resources-charities-about-political-activities/political-activities-basic-requirements.html>

Distinguishing Between Charitable and Political Activities (Fact Sheet)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/resources-charities-donors/resources-charities-about-political-activities/distinguishing-between-charitable-political-activities.html>

Partisan Activities (Fact Sheet)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/resources-charities-donors/resources-charities-about-political-activities/partisan-political-activities.html>

Reporting Requirements (Fact Sheet)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/resources-charities-donors/resources-charities-about-political-activities/changes-compliance-reporting-requirements.html>

Questions and Answers About Political Activities

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/resources-charities-donors/resources-charities-about-political-activities/questions-answers-about-political-activities.html>

Advocacy: More Resources

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Imagine Canada

Election Kit – 2011

This toolkit was developed to support Canadian charities involvement in the 2011 Federal Election. The issues highlighted in the kit will be different but many of the other resources are still current. The information summarized by Imagine Canada related to what charities can and cannot do is particularly relevant.

https://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/www/en/publicpolicy/election_kit_2011.pdf

Five Steps to Build Your Organization's Capacity to Advocate

This guest blog post is written by Myna Kota representing Girl Guides of Canada. It clearly written with easy to implement suggestions for both large and small organizations.

www.imaginecanada.ca/blog/five-steps-build-your-organizations-capacity-advocate

Six Tips for Outstanding Advocacy

Written by Imagine Canada staffers, this blog post is a positive approach to local advocacy efforts that can be undertaken by registered charities.

www.imaginecanada.ca/blog/6-tips-outstanding-advocacy

Charity Village

Generations and advocacy: What approach works best?

This article is a healthy reminder that advocacy is not necessarily a one-size fits all process. With specific ideas for reaching Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials, the article is a quick read and worth the time you will spend.

https://charityvillage.com/cms/content/topic/generations_and_advocacy_what_approach_works_best/last/166#.W38qI0hKg2w

Ontario Nonprofit Network

Election Toolkit – a Guide for Nonprofits to Meaningfully Engage in Elections – Ontario Election 2018

If you only have time to consult one resource, this is the one to choose. The toolkit provides a wealth of “how to” information as well as highlighting the pros and cons of different advocacy tactics.

<https://theonn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Election-Toolkit-Jan-2018.pdf>

ADVOCACY: Five Success Strategies

2018 | 2019

The following success strategies are credited to Christopher Wilson, author of “*Nonprofit advocacy during elections: Better to lie low or get active?*” (Charity Village, March 24, 2015). Some strategies have been edited for application in the Alberta environment.

1

Keep your efforts focused on your key issues. Distill your concerns and needs to a few main issues - three is a useful limit – issues that you can summarize in a few compelling bullet points and convey to candidates in a short conversation. Each issue should be tied to clear, achievable asks that will be readily understood by your supporters and the candidates. The goal should be to raise the profile of your issues and gain commitments from the parties on each of your major asks.

2

Avoid any hint of partisanship. Even if your issues are politically polarizing – as with hot button social policy questions - you’re wise to stay clear of aligning with any political party or endorsing their positions. Ideally, you try to gain support from all the major parties – so that no matter who wins the election, your organization wins. If that isn’t possible, just advance your issues, get the parties to say where they stand, and let the voters take it from there.

3

Engage your supporters or members in your efforts. Your organization’s supporters are your greatest asset in influencing the political process and government decisions. They are voters after all - and some of them are super-supporters who will actively campaign on your behalf. Fortunately, the various social media platforms now provide us with tools to engage supporters very cost effectively. Encourage your supporters via Facebook, Twitter, and the others, and by broadcast emails, to talk up your issues and spread the word to their social networks.

4

Raise the public profile of your issues using new and traditional media. You can generate public buzz around your issues very cost-effectively through social media (e.g. Twitter and YouTube), op-eds, pre-written stories placed in neighbourhood papers, and free news coverage in the broadcast media. If your organization has a budget for national media advertising that’s a huge asset – just make sure your ads focus tightly on your issues, stay politically neutral, and drive traffic to your online campaign through direct links or memorable URLs.

5

Co-ordinate closely your online and off-line election efforts. Social media and e-advocacy are great for generating and demonstrating support on your issues. But they are most effective in combination with on-the-ground efforts: private meetings with candidates (always including constituents), letters requesting support from the parties and questions at all-candidates meetings.

ADVOCACY TACTICS: How to Engage

2018 | 2019

Write Letters

Write to your MLA and other political candidates in your area. Before the election you can use this tactic to introduce your agency and at the same time request a meeting.

Following the election, a letter of congratulations is one way to begin the process of establishing a good government relation. Politicians and other decision makers pay attention to their mail. There is an expectation that they respond to concerns of citizens - it is good politics and crucial to their political survival.

Check out the template in this toolkit to get started with a letter of introduction.

Plan a Town Hall Meeting

Organize an all candidates, town hall. To remain nonpartisan, you must invite all candidates. Develop nonpartisan questions that all candidates have an opportunity to respond. This may be a good activity to undertake as along with other ALIGN members in your community. Another key success factor in this type of activity is to secure a nonpartisan, skilled moderator – someone who can keep order and let everyone be respectfully heard.

A great tip from the Ontario Nonprofit Network ... If one or more of your invited candidates does not attend, instruct the moderator to introduce the guests on stage and simply state who is absent. Do not leave an empty chair as this may appear confrontational.

[Source: ONN Election Toolkit, 2018.](#)

Meet and Greet

Meet with local candidates. Once you have secured a meeting time, prepare your presentation to be able to make your key point succinctly. Draw on your agency's previous annual reports, surveys or academic research to support your message.

Personal experience to illustrate the issue is a great way to garner attention and also makes your message memorable – but remember at the meeting – you are your agency, so personal opinions are probably not appropriate.

Provide suggestions about what is needed and offer to follow up with any questions or further information as required.

After your meeting send them a thank-you note and/or call the office and see if there is any further information required by the politician.

Check out the “Thank You” letter template at the end of this toolkit as a way to close the meeting and leave the door to dialogue open.

Tell Your Story

Tell your story often and tell it well. Appeal to different media outlets in your local community to feature the impact of your work. This may be more difficult to achieve in larger centres, but often smaller, local stations and newspapers are interested in profiling home town success stories.

Don't forget that many people in your community may not be aware of the programs and services child and family service agencies provide.

If you are not familiar with the media outlets in your area, consult any of the following resources:

<https://www.nmc-mic.ca/about-us/find-a-newspaper>

www.canadianradiodirectory.com/alberta

<https://www.mediainalberta.ca/alberta-media-directory/television-stations.html>

ADVOCACY TACTICS: **continued**

2018 | 2019

Attend Debates

Whether your network of human service agencies hosts its own town hall or not, your agency can send one or more representatives to local leadership debates or forums hosted by others in the community.

Take the opportunity during question period to ask nonpartisan questions that will raise the policy issues of greatest interest to your agency.

Promote Voter Engagement

Encourage everyone to VOTE. There are many voter engagement campaigns that have been used successfully in Canada and the U.S.

Apathy is Boring, is a nonpartisan organization working to increase the number of youth voters who participate in Canadian elections. In a video presentation, [What Makes Someone Vote](#), the organization cited a 10% increase in youth voters when they were simply asked to vote. In a study on volunteer and voting behaviour, Apathy is Boring found that 45% of youth said they did not volunteer or vote because no one asked them to.

Voter engagement must be a nonpartisan activity – there can be no suggestions, recommendations or requests, implicit or explicit asking someone to vote for a specific candidate, or platform.

The following resources provide some ideas:

Vote With Your Mission (for nonprofits)
<https://www.calnonprofits.org/programs/voteyourmission>

Apathy is Boring
<http://www.apathyisboring.org/electionsalberta-1-1/>

ABC Life Literacy
<https://abclifeliteracy.ca/civic-literacy>

TEMPLATE 1: Agency Introduction

2018 | 2019

Prepare on Agency Letterhead

Ensure the salutation and address reflect the candidate's proper title (Dr./Ms./Honourable, etc.). Refer to the candidate's website / bio to be sure.

(DATE)

Dear _____:

Introductory Paragraph - Begin the letter by stating how you are looking forward to learning more about his/her campaign platform regarding the sustainability of the child and family services sector as an essential service in Alberta. If during his/her campaign or if he/she recently spoke of a concern that is mutual for your agency, then highlight it (e.g. "During your campaign you spoke of your desire to ensure that the needs of vulnerable Albertans are met.").

Body of Letter - Briefly summarize what your community is all about. (The _____ was established in _____. We are a charitable organization in your community and we are concerned with _____ (options here include: ability to hire and retain qualified staff; ability to meet demand for programs and services; impact of economic downturn on already vulnerable children and families). We provide the following services in this community _____.

Closing Paragraph - End the letter by once again by reiterating the high value child and family service agencies bring to a community – through good times and bad. Ultimately, it is Alberta's children and families who benefit when we have a healthy and sustainable workforce. The work of our agency and others like it require policy support and appropriate funding to deliver essential services in the child and family services sector. Extend them an opportunity to meet with you or request a time to meet and discuss issues of mutual interest.

Yours truly,

This letter could be written by the chair of the Board of Directors or the CEO/ED of the agency.

TEMPLATE 2: Thank You-Just the Beginning

Prepare on Agency Letterhead

Direct the letter to the individual(s) you actually met with. Use the addressee's proper title (Dr./Ms./Honourable, etc.). Refer to the candidate's website / bio to be sure.

(DATE)

Dear _____:

Introductory Paragraph - Begin the letter by stating how you much you appreciated the opportunity to learn more about candidate's campaign platform. Highlight any part of the discussion that had specific relevance for your agency.

Body of Letter - Briefly summarize the issues of greatest importance to your agency and express your willingness to follow-up with additional information as appropriate.

Closing Paragraph - End the letter by once again by reiterating the high value child and family service agencies bring to a community and conclude with your hope that this meeting was just the beginning of a dialogue that will lead to keeping Alberta's children safe; the workforce healthy; and the economy strong.

Yours truly,

This letter should be written by the most senior individual from the agency or board of directors who attended the meeting.



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