

2021 FEDERAL ELECTION PLAYBOOK



CAOT • ACE

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR YOUR PROFESSION!

Federal elections are an opportunity to ask Canada's current and future political leaders questions about issues that matter most to you. CAOT has created an Election Playbook to help guide your advocacy efforts in the lead-up to voting day. Here are the steps you can take to have your voice heard:



STEP 1 - FIND YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES

Visit the Elections Canada website, at [ELECTIONS.CA](https://elections.ca), to find information about candidates in your electoral district.



STEP 2 - CONNECT WITH YOUR CANDIDATES

- Visit your local candidate's webpage for information on community events and engagements.
- Follow and connect with your local candidates on social media.
- Attend debates and townhalls.
- Call or email your local candidates.
- Engage with your local candidates when they come knocking on your door.



STEP 3 - ENGAGE AND ASK QUESTIONS

Use the brief overviews in this Playbook regarding five current health care issues in Canada, along with the OT value proposition, to engage with your candidates, ask questions and propose solutions. **REMEMBER** – candidates want to hear from YOU as Canada's health care professionals.



LONG TERM CARE



AGING IN PLACE



MENTAL HEALTH



RETURN TO WORK



PEDIATRIC HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

LONG TERM CARE (LTC)

THE ISSUE



58%

of COVID-19 deaths in Canada have been residents living in LTC. (NIA, July 2021)

87%

of LTC residents suffer from cognitive impairment. (CIHI, 2018)

90%

of direct care in LTC homes is provided by unregulated and unlicensed care aides or personal support workers. (Royal Society of Canada, 2020)

86%

of Canadians believe that LTC should be an integrated part of our health system and funded and administered accordingly. (NIA, 2021)

92%

of Canadians aged 65 and older agreed that the issues within LTC homes were evident before the COVID-19 pandemic. (NIA, 2021)

THE SOLUTION

Implement national LTC standards that comprise regulated health professionals, including OTs, as essential health care providers in LTC homes.

HOW CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HELP?

OTs provide cost-effective services for individuals experiencing progressive functional and/or cognitive decline, including complex, chronic, or progressive illnesses. They are the only members of health care teams that focus on the fit between the individual's environment and their strengths and abilities.

OTs assess older adults' health and safety needs with families and interprofessional teams; design and implement customized plans so that seniors can enjoy the highest possible quality of life. They support individuals in restoring or maintaining function and independence using mobility devices, environmental modifications, mindfulness, goal setting and activity routines. OT helps facilitate socially inclusive environments that foster recreational, civic, cultural, leisure and social activities that reduce social isolation.

WHAT CAN CANDIDATES DO IF ELECTED?

- Recognize OTs as primary care providers and include OTs on interdisciplinary health care teams in LTC.
- Fund the implementation of national standards in LTC.
- Ensure that staffing in LTC facilities meets the complex health care needs of residents.
- Work with provincial jurisdictions to secure sustainable solutions to LTC problems.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

How will your party commit to protecting Canadians living in LTC?

How will your party ensure that OTs are recognized as essential health care providers in LTC?

What measures will your party take to implement necessary national LTC standards?

AGING IN PLACE

THE ISSUE



4 IN 5

hospitalizations from injuries involving seniors are due to falls. (CIHI, 2019)

91%

of Canadians report they plan on living in their own homes for as long as possible. (Pandemic Perspectives on Aging, 2020)

1 IN 9 SENIORS

living in LTC could age in their own homes. (CIHI, 2020)

76,000

Canadians are diagnosed with dementia every year. (Alzheimer's Society Canada, "Dementia numbers in Canada", 2021)

68%

expected growth of Canada's seniors' population over the next 20 years. (CIHI, 2021)

1 IN 12

hospital patients had their stay extended because home care services or supports were not ready. (CIHI, 2019)

THE SOLUTION

Include OTs in interdisciplinary primary care teams in communities to support aging in place. Involve OTs in design/build teams to incorporate accessibility and safety features, 75% of these can be included for less than \$500 per home. (Home Modifications Canada, 2017)

HOW CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HELP?

OTs bring an expert perspective to home modifications so that Canadians can stay home longer and safer. OT interventions related to housing can also postpone entry into residential care, saving up to \$48,000 per year per person (Laing & Buisson, 2008).

OTs support caregivers with skills training re assisting with activities of daily living such as dressing, food preparation and eating, managing aggressive behaviours, thus avoiding caregiver burnout.

OT assists individuals with dementia to safely age in place by: mitigating wandering behaviors; establishing positive routines; promoting health and safety; managing activities of daily living; encouraging social participation and physical exercise.

WHAT CAN CANDIDATES DO IF ELECTED?

- Ensure OTs are part of interdisciplinary primary care teams to support aging in place.
- Increase funding for accessible home adaptation programs, including OT home assessments, to support lower income individuals.
- Have OTs on design/build teams to support home modifications and facilitate seniors aging in place.
- Cover OT in Extended Health Benefits' plans to facilitate aging in place.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

What will your party do to ensure universal access to OT services?

What will your party do to include OTs on primary care teams across Canada so that they can provide practical advice on home modifications to individuals facing age-related realities?

How will your party support Canadians in aging safely within the comfort of their own homes?

MENTAL HEALTH

THE ISSUE



1 IN 5

Canadians will experience a mental health problem or illness in any given year. (CMHA, 2020)

5.3 MILLION

Canadians reported needing help with their mental health. (Statistics Canada, 2019)

6 IN 10 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous people reported that their mental health worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Statistics Canada, 2021)

77%

of Canadian adults have reported feeling negative emotions since the start of the pandemic. (CMHA, 2021)

AMISSIIONS DOUBLED

in Canada's children's hospitals for children and youth, following suicide attempts, since March 2020. (Children's Healthcare Canada, 2021)

THE SOLUTION

Increase access to community-based OT services, include OT as part of Extended Health Benefits and fund OT in Indigenous Services Canada's Programs.

HOW CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HELP?

OTs are essential mental health care providers skilled at addressing trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and disruptions, such as the various changes brought on by COVID-19.

OTs incorporate a strengths-based approach to help individuals engage in activities that bring a sense of purpose, joy and meaning to their lives. They provide client-centred mental health and addictions services in **homes and communities**.

OTs are uniquely skilled in delivering evidence-based mental health interventions so that Canadians can **get on with the job of living**. OT services include: motivational interviewing; cognitive behavioural therapy; life skills training; mindfulness; stress management; coping strategies; daily routine modification; health, wellness and safety regimes.

WHAT CAN CANDIDATES DO IF ELECTED?

- Ensure OTs are part of interdisciplinary primary care teams to increase access to community-based mental health care in communities across Canada.
- Include OT as part of Extended Health Benefits' plans.
- Work to increase the number of OTs providing services to Indigenous communities, and other underserved or at-risk populations.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

How will your party ensure the inclusion of OT in Extended Health Benefits' plans?

How will your party address timely access to mental health services in Indigenous communities across Canada?

What will your party do to reduce the suicide rate amongst Canadians?

RETURN TO WORK

THE ISSUE



30%

of people who tested positive for COVID-19 have "long COVID"; persisting COVID-19 symptoms. (Greenhalgh T. et al., 2020)

ABSENTEEISM INCREASED

since 2019, with the total lost days per worker at 15.1 in the public sector and 10.5 in the private sector (Statistics Canada, 2021)

\$16.6 BILLION

annual cost to the Canadian economy – before COVID-19. (Conference Board of Canada, 2013)

5.4 MILLION

Canadian employees work mainly from home, compared to 1.8 million pre-pandemic. (Conference Board of Canada, 2021)

52%

of approved federal public service disability claims are a result of psychological health challenges. (ISED Canada, 2020)

THE SOLUTION

Ensure access to OT services by including OT in Extended Health Benefits' Plans.

HOW CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HELP?

OTs/OTAs assess an individual's functional capacity following a life change and provide solutions for integration back to work while keeping in mind the needs of the employer and employee, resulting in a reduction of lost workdays, increased employee productivity and improved workplace health and well-being. OTs can also facilitate healthy and safe work environment transitions through tailor-made, home modifications.

OTs/OTAs can help rehabilitate those suffering from long-COVID, with lingering physical and/or mental illnesses, through customized individually paced program, where OTs facilitate improvement in function and a therapeutic and **safe pathway for returning to work**.

WHAT CAN CANDIDATES DO IF ELECTED?

- Ensure the inclusion of OTs in interdisciplinary primary care teams treating post-COVID-19 syndrome.
- Increase access to community-based mental health supports, including OT services, for effective return to work transition.
- Include OT in the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP).
- Fund OT in Indigenous Services Canada's programs

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

How will your party respond to the needs of Canada's COVID-19 "long-haulers"?

What will your party do to secure OT coverage in Extended Health Benefits' plans in the public and private sector?

What measures will your party take to address the growing need for workplace mental health supports?

PEDIATRIC HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

THE ISSUE



6 MILLION

Canadians are children below the age of 14. (Statistics Canada, 2018)

1 IN 66

children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018)

HALF

of First Nations children live in poverty. (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, 2019)

200,000

children's treatments (essential development services) were placed on hold because of COVID-19. (Children's Healthcare Canada, 2020)

70%

of Canadians believe children will suffer long-term mental, social and emotional impacts from COVID-19. (ABACUS Data, 2020)

CANADA RANKED 30TH

among 38 OECD countries for children's health and well-being. (UNICEF, 2020)

THE SOLUTION

Ensure all children in Canada have access to OT services by including OTs on interdisciplinary primary care teams in communities across Canada, including rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

HOW CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HELP?

OTs/OTAs provide a strengths-based approach that helps children with cognitive or functional impairments, assisting in the development of cognitive skills, fine motor skill, gross motor skills (e.g. body coordination), self-care tasks and social skills.

They assess a child's needs and environment to design interventions that help them in progressing through the stages of social and cognitive development, **supporting children's growth and helping them transition to functional, healthy and independent adults.**

Pediatric OT benefits children of all ages as OTs provide culturally appropriate, evidence-based assessment and treatment, using a trauma-informed approach to care to support children, youth and families suffering from trauma and mental health illness.

WHAT CAN CANDIDATES DO IF ELECTED?

- Provide families with government-funded supportive housing, with access to OT services, to help children living with disabilities.
- Ensure funding and access to health care services, regardless of medical diagnosis to ensure that no child gets left behind.
- Integrate OT in Indigenous Services Canada's programs to support children with complex needs and mental health illnesses.
- Include OT in Extended Health Benefits' Plans to ensure families can afford timely and necessary child development care.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

How will your party address the significant ways COVID-19 has, and will continue to impact the health and well-being of children and youth?

What will your party do to ensure OT assessments and interventions are accessible to children with disabilities? How will the waitlists & backlogs be addressed?

How will your party support Indigenous families in accessing Jordan's principle funding?

**FOR INFORMATION ON THE ELECTION AND
HOW TO VOTE, VISIT**



**TO OBTAIN INFORMATION OF CANADA'S FEDERAL
PARTY PLATFORMS, CLICK THE FOLLOWING LINKS**



OT365

To offer candidates more information and stories on the impact of OT, let them know about www.oteveryday.ca.

