



July 2022

## BCDHA Advocacy Letter Writing Guide

The most impactful letters are those that come from the heart. Empowering yourself by learning to communicate your own perspective, thoughts, or experience in an advocacy letter is a skill that goes beyond signing your name on a template. This guide is designed to accompany our Advocacy Letter Writing video. Stay tuned for part two of our Advocacy Letter Writing series.

### How do I to write a letter to an elected official?

The BCDHA Advocacy Letter Writing Module, along with this guide, is designed to help oral health professionals learn how to write letters to elected officials about issues that matter to them.

### What is a letter to an elected official?

When you have an issue you want to get it noticed by people who have the power to help. To help you get the best results, we will show you how to write a letter to your elected officials. A well-written personal letter may be the most effective way to communicate with elected officials. They want to know how their constituents feel about issues, especially when those issues involve them making decisions.

Your elected officials usually know what advocacy groups are saying about an issue, but they may not understand how a particular decision affects you. A well-written letter describing your experiences, observations, and opinions may help persuade an official in your favour.

### Why write to elected officials?

Maybe you are not convinced that writing a letter to your elected official is the best way to spend your time. There are several reasons it is worth your while, including:

- To explain to an official how a particular issue affects you or your group.
- To express support for a proposed law, policy, or course of action.
- To oppose a proposed law, policy, or course of action.

In any of the above cases, the letter may include information about the issue that the official may not have or suggest an alternate course of action that she has not previously heard about.

There are many other reasons to write a letter to an elected official. To explore these, visit this [community tool box by the University of Kansas](#).

When should you write to an elected official?

Whenever an issue arises that concerns your group, but especially when:

- You want an official to consider a certain action or policy (e.g., increasing funding for a program for senior citizens).
- There is an upcoming vote on a policy that concerns your group. Letters are most effective when the vote is about to be taken. This is a good time to use e-mail.
- You want to respond (positively or negatively) to a completed action or a change in policy (e.g., enacting a law that requires people to wear seatbelts).
- You want to point out a deficiency or need in a particular area (e.g., more public transportation to the community health clinics, more police patrols through your neighbourhood).
- You need information (e.g., about what happened the last time a certain issue came up for a vote).
- You need advice (how to approach another official, what kind of event will attract large numbers of officials to take notice, etc.). In this instance, you would probably be writing to an official that you have already had positive contact with.

There are certain times that might be more effective times to send a letter. To explore these, visit this [community tool box by the University of Kansas](#).

*Adapted from [University of Kansas Community Tool Box](#).*

## Advocacy Letter Template

Recipient Name and Address

Date

**Dear [Find out the name of your local official],**

**Paragraph 1: Official opening – state your name and why you are writing.**

- Establish the relationship. How are you related to the recipient? If you are writing to a local, provincial, or federal politician, include your riding. If you are writing to the Minister of Health include your profession.
- State your purpose. You do not need to use fancy words; plain language is best. Keep it focused on the specific action or issue you are writing about.

**Second Paragraph: Impart your understanding of the issue using facts.**

- Concisely convey your understanding of the issue—highlight why it is crucial to act.
- Remember to offer your expertise while continuing to use simple language to communicate the problem.

**Third Paragraph: Get personal.**

- Reflect and describe how this issue affects your life. Why is it important to you? Include a story that has shaped your position on this issue. Examples are your friend.

\*Note of caution and best practice: while sharing stories is useful, be mindful to remove identifiers. As a regulated health professional, it is essential to uphold your duty of confidentiality and protect patient privacy (see [CDHBC](#) or [CDSBC](#)). Ask yourself: *If this story was shared at a government meeting, would I feel confident that I have not breached someone's confidentiality?*

**Fourth Paragraph: One more time for the people in the back!**

- Use this short paragraph to restate your desired action.
- If you are opposing an action in your letter, use this paragraph to offer an alternative action.

**Fifth Paragraph: The end.**

- Offer the recipient a thank you for their time and attention.
- Inform them that you expect a reply. Remember to include your contact information so they know how to reach you.

Adapted from [University of Kansas Community Tool Box](#).

## Sample letter



January 21, 2020

CDHBC Board  
Suite 300, 388 Harbour Road  
Victoria, BC  
V9A 3S1

Dear Jennifer and the CDHBC Board:

The BCDHA is pleased to see the Bylaws for the College of Dental Hygienists of British Columbia posted for consultation and discussion. We have had many questions directed to us as an organization and as Board Members of the BCDHA over the past few weeks and we believe many of these questions can be reasonably addressed with additional information and discussion between our organizations.

As per the conversation between Andrea and Jennifer, the BCDHA recognizes that this is a challenging and tenuous time for change in British Columbia, and that it is essential we maintain a positive working relationship between the College and Association. Despite some of our concerns over the College Board's interpretation of the government regulations, we would like to follow the agreed upon course of action and submit to you some of our key concerns and questions for your consideration. We do recognize that there may be some overlap in our questions and what the CDHBC has presented in its FAQs and presentations over the past few months. We have left these questions in this document, because we feel there are still significant questions and concerns from dental hygienists in the province, and for this reason, we believe it is important that we pursue clear and transparent language whenever possible.

Perhaps the biggest concern that has been raised is around the two distinct categories of dental hygienist with an RDH (registered dental hygienist) and DHP (dental hygiene practitioner). There are many questions regarding why two classifications are required when the scope of practice will be identical. We have reviewed this section in detail, and have reviewed similarities in other professions (e.g., when degree entry-to-practice was introduced, registrants were still RNs regardless if they had a degree or diploma). Dental hygienists require clarity around this specific issue, and that this question is at the heart of much of the confusion that is being expressed. For many, there is a sense that while the 365 exempt category is being removed, it is simply now called DHP. It would be very helpful to provide more information on the evidence behind this decision, as well as clear indications of the pathways that will be required for RDHs to switch to a DHP practice if both designations are implemented. Members are very cautious and concerned about this, and BCDHA would like more clarity, but also can offer the opportunity to explain this to our members if we feel more prepared to provide strong answers.

For our other questions, we have listed them below by section as they have been raised to us, or discussed by the Board, over the past few weeks. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this with your board further or receive a written response to these questions. We recognize that the February 7<sup>th</sup> date is close and that in the current climate, we need to make strong, strategic decisions that benefit the profession and put all dental hygienists into a positive context to become registrants of one oral health college.

Ultimately, BCDHA is in a position to influence, inform, and educate members on the benefits of the changes being made, both in terms of the Regulations/Bylaws and also regarding government's proposed Regulatory Framework. Our hope is that with some discussion and collaboration, we can come up with a plan that will ensure the best outcomes for dental hygienists and the public in this province.

Sincerely,  
BCDHA Board