

Key Messages for 2018 Ontario Provincial Elections

Almost **34,000 people** in Ontario live with a spinal cord injury, with at least one new injury occurring every day. This election season, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCIO) wants to put you in the driver's seat to inspire change and build a more equitable and accessible Ontario.

In order to amplify your voice, we consulted with the SCIO community and other organizations and have determined four key areas we'd like to focus on. These are urgent priorities for elected officials. They are easy to understand, and we'll show you below how you can put them to use this election.

Key Message # 1: Inadequate access to mobility devices

Access to mobility devices like wheelchairs is a human right. The current health policy only covers 75% of costs and many Ontarians struggle to get what they need to be independent. Shouldn't every person be able to travel outside their home to work and participate fully in the community?

Key Message # 2: Lack of comprehensive coverage for medical supplies

There is no complete coverage program for Ontarians who need medical supplies. Only those who stay on social assistance can get their medical supplies paid for. Did you know that something as simple as using the bathroom can cost \$20-\$30 each time?

Key Message # 3: Lack of access to family doctors who understand an SCI

People with an SCI need accessible health care, including family doctors and a health network with sound knowledge of SCIs. A person with a heart condition receives top quality health care, starting with their family doctor – why doesn't this apply to a person with an SCI?

Key Message # 4: Full accessibility for all needs to be a government priority

Ontario is supposed to be fully accessible by 2025, but not enough is changing to make that commitment a reality. There are still many barriers to full community participation, and we are not on track to eliminate them all in seven years.

Take a few moments to consider these key messages and you'll see they are basically **four accessibility issues**: 1) mobility devices, 2) medical coverage, 3) medical care, 4) getting around.

Don't worry about the exact wording of the key messages when you're talking to others – just focus on the four accessibility areas and express them in whatever way you feel comfortable.

If you have any questions, contact advocacy@sciontario.org. We're happy to help!



How To Use the Key Messages With Your Candidates

Basically, live conversations and letters are the most effective ways to communicate.

Talk to the candidates in your riding

Attend their events and have a detailed conversation when they knock on your door. Hand them a copy of the [Four Key Urgencies Briefing Note](#) and [show them on the Note](#) where they can check out our website (yourmoveontario.ca) and fill in our questionnaire.

Be confident in getting out your message! Ask your candidates some pointed questions, like “What will you do for people with a spinal cord injury and other physical disabilities?” and “How will you ensure equal accessibility for everyone, so all your constituents can get everywhere they want to go?” Even, “I support people with an SCI. Should I vote for you?”

Write a letter to your candidates

This is a great way to share your passion and commitment to a cause. You can find a template letter on our [website](#), but we encourage you to speak in your own voice and share your own story, while also including one or more of the four key messages on this sheet.

Keep your letter short and simple, including accurate facts and your personal story. Here is one way to organize it:

i. The “from” and “to” information

- a. In the upper left corner: your name and address. Below that, the candidate’s name and address. Below that, the date. Then start the letter with the correct salutation: the candidate’s name and title.

ii. Paragraph 1: Personal introduction and purpose of the letter

- a. Example: My name is John Smith and I am writing to you as a constituent who has a spinal cord injury and is severely impacted by the lack of an affordable medical supply coverage program in Ontario.

iii. Paragraph 2: Summary of your issue, situation and history, including some facts

- a. Example: As a person with SCI, I need an intermittent catheter to continue my day-to-day activities. But the average cost of catheters per person, per year, is over \$4,000. I can’t afford to sustain such a hefty cost. There are a number of people living with a spinal cord injury in your constituency who might also be affected by this.

iv. Paragraph 3: What you would like to see happen to address your situation

- a. Example: I would like to meet with you to discuss the urgent need for a province-wide comprehensive medical supply coverage program for people such as myself who need medical supplies but can’t afford to pay for them. Could you contact me to tell me what you can do to help me? When you are available?

Closing: Yours sincerely, your signature plus your typed name and phone number



Four Key Urgencies

Content from yourmoveontario.ca
Printable version.

1. Access to Mobility Devices

Mobility devices – manual and motorized wheelchairs - allow people to live, play and work independently and, for those with a permanent disability, should be considered a human right over their lifetime.

What needs to change?

The Ontario government needs to review and change the mobility device sector, with an aim to raise standards of practice and move toward a human rights model to improve access and independence.

Cost

Depending on your disability, wheelchairs can run from \$5,000 to \$25,000, with the base price being 40% cheaper in the USA. Ontario provides 75% of the cost of a chair, but there is a long application process involved and many Ontarians are struggling to cover the 25% on their own, creating a huge barrier to independence.

Industry customer service

People are not receiving the equipment they need in a timely fashion. Repairs and replacement parts take a very long time which puts the individual at risk, sometimes requiring extended bed rest simply because of the wait.

Range of devices offered in Ontario

Needs vary greatly and options are very limited, unless a device is on the Ontario Government Assistive Device Program (ADP) List for 75% subsidy. Devices under the ADP subsidy are approved under the current criteria of providing independence only within the home, leaving other needs unmet.

Inconsistent expertise and support

The expertise available to people is a regional lottery. There are not enough Ontario Government Assistive Device Program Authorizers capable of supporting complex conditions like spinal cord injuries.



2. Access to Medical Supplies

There is currently no province-wide comprehensive medical supply coverage program for those with permanent medical supply needs. For instance, every person who uses intermittent catheterization should be able to rely on full coverage of catheters, so they can use a clean catheter each time they need one. Of the 25 top economic countries in the world, Canada is one of only two that does not have policies restricting the re-use of a catheter.

What needs to change?

The Ontario government needs to introduce a province-wide comprehensive medical supply coverage program for people with disabilities. Without this coverage, health risks increase.

An estimated 34,000 people in Ontario, including many with spinal cord injuries, perform intermittent self-catheterization. Intermittent catheters are not supposed to be reused but they often are because many people have no choice. The average cost of catheters per person, per year, is over \$4,000, which is more than many can afford.

What is intermittent catheterization?

The most commonly used technique for bladder management; intermittent catheterization involves the insertion of an intermittent catheter into the bladder via the urethra to drain the bladder of urine, and then the removal of the catheter when finished.

3. Accessible Health Care for All

In Ontario, if a person has a heart condition, there are defined processes and supports in place to ensure optimal health care. Similarly, for those who are diagnosed with cancer, each individual is guided by a health care team and goes through a process that defines the best treatment. What happens if you have a spinal cord injury? There is a clear road map for the first four months and then... it gets a little foggy. Health care gets harder to get and further from home.

What needs to change?

The Ontario government needs to ensure people with spinal cord injuries have fully inclusive access, in their own community, to family doctors with relevant knowledge and experience.

Together, we want to ensure each and every Ontarian with a spinal cord injury has access to a family physicians engagement network, specifically:

- Access to a family physician, or a network of physicians, who understands spinal cord injury and can provide reliable support and the tools needed to provide proper health care.
- Access to specialists linked with one of the five dedicated SCI Rehab Centers in Ontario.



- Access to a multi-professional team, which may include an attendant, a nurse, an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist, a respiratory therapist and/or a wheelchair vendor to name a few.

4. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Ontario has in place the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to adopt practices that eliminate barriers to participation of individuals with disabilities. The province undertook to be fully accessible by 2025. We are off course. We need a government that will make accessibility a priority.

What needs to change?

The Ontario government needs to ensure the province is fully accessible in seven short years.

Spinal Cord Injury Ontario has been highly involved with the standard development committees of the AODA. We sat on the Transportation Standard Committee and currently have dedicated staff a part of the Employment Standard, Education Standard and Health Standard. We applaud the Accessibility Directorate's Office for creating efficient processes within an open government where communities weigh in on the standard recommendations produced. We would like to see more traction in the process from recommendation to royal assent (making the standard law). We are looking for a government administration to produce quick and efficient legislation once standards are produced. We are looking to candidates to tell us how their political will for the AODA will be different. So we can truly see Ontario become the accessible province it needs to be.

