
Framework for Government Relations and Advocacy

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

June 2009



Table of Contents

BACKGROUND..... 3

1.0 MISSION OF THE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF CANADA 3

2.0 GOAL OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY 3

3.0 RELATIONSHIP TO MOMENTUM 2015 3

4.0 PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY 4

5.0 CORE VALUES OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY 4

6.0 OBJECTIVES OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY 5

7.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES..... 6

8.0 FRAMEWORK APPLICATION 7

APPENDIX ONE 8

APPENDIX TWO 9

The Framework for Government Relations and Advocacy was approved by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada National Board of Directors, June 18, 2009.

Background

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada has been engaged in government relations and advocacy¹ activities almost since its inception in 1948. These activities were formalized with the establishment of the National Government Relations Committee (formerly called the National Social Action Committee) in the late 1980s. Several chapters and one division had established their own committees prior to that time.

The Social Action and Advocacy Guidelines, approved by the National Board of Directors in November 1992, defined social action as efforts to improve legislation, policies, practices, opportunities and/or attitudes that affect people with MS. The National Government Relations Committee uses this definition in the more inclusive term “government relations and advocacy”. Momentum 2015² – the MS Society’s strategic plan - identified government relations as a key component.

The National Government Relations Committee believes the most effective way to get results from our government relations and advocacy activities is to focus on key nation-wide priorities. The committee commits to reviewing the priorities on an annual basis to ensure they remain reflective of identified needs and to amend the framework to reflect future strategic planning initiatives of the MS Society, when and where appropriate. Current priorities are detailed under Objectives of Government Relations and Advocacy (6.0).

The Government Relations and Advocacy Framework is intended to:

- Consolidate MS Society values and principles vis-à-vis government relations and advocacy in a single, accessible document;
- Incorporate Momentum 2015 directions relating to government relations and advocacy in a focused framework;
- Demonstrate how the different levels of the organization contribute to the development of nation-wide government relations priorities;
- Demonstrate the responsibility of each level of the organization in carrying out nation-wide priorities and in linking regional and/or local priorities to those that are nation-wide;
- Avert discrepancies among nation-wide, division and chapter government relations activities;
- Provide a common structure for the measurement and evaluation of government relations activities at all levels.

1.0 Mission of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

The Mission of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is: To be a leader in finding a cure for multiple sclerosis and enabling people affected by MS to enhance their quality of life.

2.0 Goal of Government Relations and Advocacy

The goal of government relations and advocacy is to support the Mission of the MS Society of Canada by advocating for improvements to governmental policies and legislation and relevant non-governmental practices, actions and attitudes.

3.0 Relationship to Momentum 2015

The Framework for Government Relations and Advocacy supports Strategic Directions 4, 5 and 14 of Momentum 2015. Specifically, the Strategic Directions are:

- Strategic Direction 4 - Increase responsiveness to MS issues, among governments, local authorities, corporations and other relevant organizations;
- Strategic Direction 5 – Foster internal and external collaboration and knowledge exchange;
- Strategic Direction 14 – Intensify volunteer engagement.

4.0 Philosophy of Government Relations and Advocacy

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada puts people affected by multiple sclerosis at the heart of decisions made about government relations and advocacy work. These include:

- Advocacy to influence governments, corporations, businesses and other non-governmental organizations to assist people who are primary clients, as defined in the Client Services Framework;³
- Advocacy to influence federal and provincial governments to fund MS research specifically and health research in general;
- Advocacy to influence governments at all levels regarding practices that benefit the MS Society as a health charity.

5.0 Core Values of Government Relations and Advocacy

- All advocacy work is ethically defensible, is in accordance with legislation and with MS Society policies, regulations and procedures;
- Advocacy work is non-partisan and not associated with a particular political party and/or government;
- Advocacy work is focused on results that will deliver meaningful benefit to the greatest possible number of primary clients and are likely to be successful;
- Advocacy work strives to be evidence-based and will utilize published, peer-reviewed studies and official data sources, whenever possible.

6.0 Objectives of Government Relations and Advocacy

To achieve the goal of government relations and advocacy, all levels of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (units, chapters, divisions and national office) seek to advocate for identified priorities aimed at bringing about improvements to legislation, policies, practices, opportunities and/or attitudes that:

- Remove barriers for primary clients to employment and income security;
- Enhance access of primary clients to timely provision of health care, including appropriate drugs and therapies;
- Improve access of primary clients to timely delivery of home/community care, supportive housing and age-appropriate/ function-appropriate long-term care;
- Improve access of primary clients to all aspects of life in their communities;
- Increase supports for individuals in their roles of caregivers of persons with MS;
- Increase funding for MS research specifically and health research in general;
- Strengthen the position of MS Society as a charitable organization through changes in legislation and regulations;
- Identify other priorities from time-to-time as per the Philosophy of Government Relations and Advocacy (4.0).

See Appendix One for a graphic representation of current priority issues and organizational structure, and Appendix Two for a detailed summary of government relations and advocacy roles and responsibilities within the MS Society.

7.0 Guiding Principles

In carrying out government relations and advocacy activities, all levels of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada must adhere to the following principles:

- Each level of the MS Society focuses advocacy works on the priority objectives as per 6.0 with the recognition there is flexibility in tailoring advocacy work to local resources and needs within the overall framework.
- Each level of the MS Society works within its sphere of responsibility and collaboratively supports the efforts of other MS Society levels. The national office acts primarily in the context of national/ international issues and leads all activities in relation to the federal government. Divisions act primarily in the context of provincial issues. They may act in areas of local concerns where no chapter exists. Chapters/ units act primarily in the context of local/ community/ municipal issues.⁴
- Government relations and advocacy priority issues are to be developed in consultation with all levels of the MS Society.
- Government relations and advocacy volunteers and staff work with external resources and partners/ coalitions and with internal volunteers and staff across departments to advance MS Society goals, principles and objectives.
- Government relations and advocacy volunteers and staff regularly evaluate advocacy activities to ensure maximum effectiveness; where feasible, common evaluation models and tools are used.
- Government relations and advocacy volunteers and staff document data, information, processes, outcomes and other relevant knowledge and disseminate this information as broadly as possible within the MS Society.

8.0 Framework Application

All levels of the MS Society are to carry out the framework in a manner that is consistent with the goal, philosophy, core values, objectives and principles. Tools to assist in its application may include:

- Conducting a needs assessment;
- Developing an inventory of requisite resources;
- Identifying existing policies and procedures which would apply;
- Establishing new policies and procedures;
- Carrying out planning and budget development prior to implementation of new advocacy activities;
- ⁴Carrying out annual planning and budget development for existing advocacy activities;
- Undertaking program evaluation;
- Documenting and disseminating key findings and knowledge.

¹ The term “government relations and advocacy” includes the term “social action”, which is often used by MS Society chapters and units.

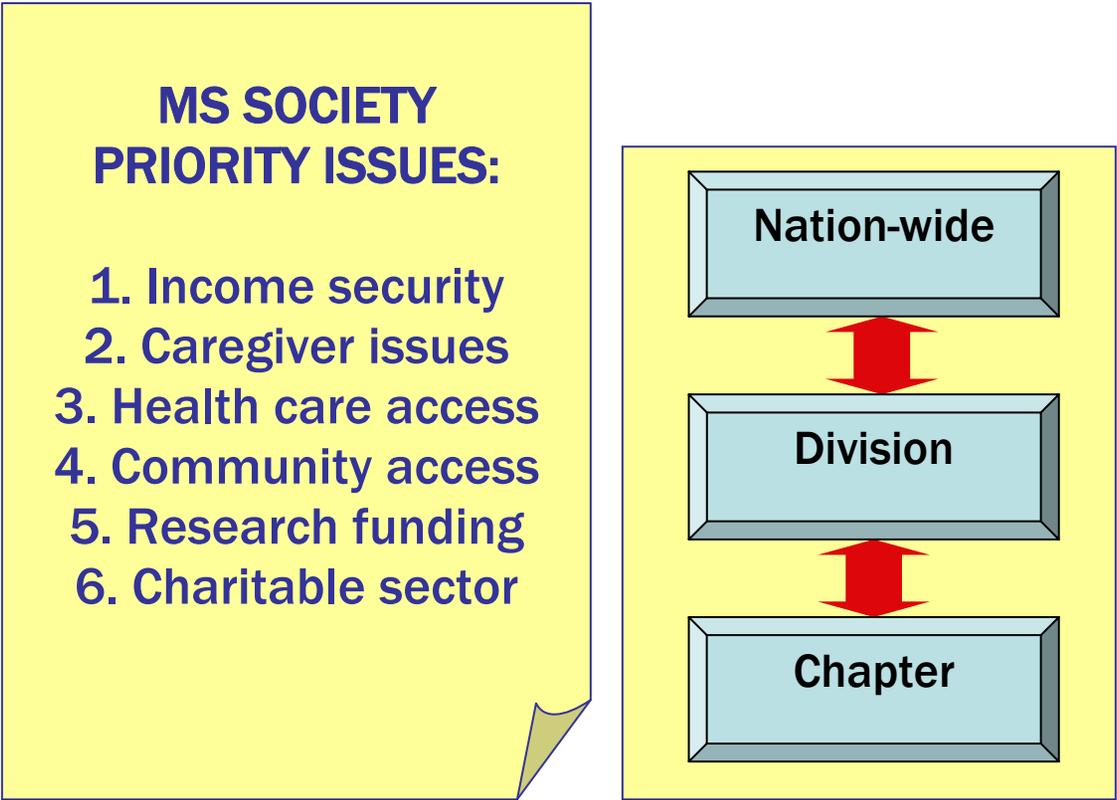
² Momentum 2015 is the MS Society of Canada’s strategic plan which was approved March 1, 2008 by the National Board of Directors.

³ Primary clients are defined as children, teens and adults in Canada who are confirmed as having MS, waiting for a diagnosis with respect to MS, close to a person with MS (e.g., family members, significant others, friends), caregivers (unpaid/informal) to a person with MS.

⁴ See Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada Social Action and Advocacy Guidelines for more details.

Appendix One

Graphic representation of government relations priorities and organizational structure



Appendix Two

Roles and Responsibilities

The following table provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities for government relations and advocacy within the MS Society of Canada. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all such activities. All levels of the MS Society focus government relations and advocacy work on agreed upon nation-wide priorities with the recognition there is flexibility in tailoring that work to local resources and needs within the overall framework. The framework recognizes a division or chapter may take the lead in implementing a particular initiative.

MS Society Priorities	Income Security	Caregiver Issues	Healthcare Access	Community Access	Research Funding	Charitable Sector
National	Establish nation-wide priority & strategy with input from divisions	Establish nation-wide priority & strategy with input from divisions	Establish nation-wide priority & strategy with input from divisions	Establish nation-wide priority & strategy with input from divisions	Establish nation-wide priority & strategy with input from divisions & research advisors, committees	Establish nation-wide priority & strategy with input from divisions
	Advocate with MPs & policy/ program officials	Advocate with MPs & policy/ program officials	Advocate with MPs & policy/ program officials	Advocate with MPs & policy/ program officials	Advocate with MPs & policy/ program officials	Advocate with MPs & policy/ program officials
	Work with &/or develop coalitions	Work with &/or develop coalitions	Work with &/or develop coalitions	Work with &/or develop coalitions	Work with &/or develop coalitions	Work with &/or develop coalitions
	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data
	Support divisions as requested	Support divisions as requested	Support divisions as requested	Support divisions as requested	Support divisions as requested	Support divisions as requested
						

Framework for Government Relations and Advocacy

MS Society Priorities	Income Security	Caregiver Issues	Healthcare Access	Community Access	Research Funding	Charitable Sector
Divisions	Establish division priority & strategy with input from chapters ¹	Establish division priority & strategy with input from chapters	Establish division priority & strategy with input from chapters	Establish division priority & strategy with input from chapters	Establish division priority & strategy with input from chapters	Establish division priority & strategy with input from chapters
	Establish strategy for division action re nation-wide priority with input from chapters	Establish strategy for division action re nation-wide priority with input from chapters	Establish strategy for division action re nation-wide priority with input from chapters	Establish strategy for division action re nation-wide priority with input from chapters	Establish strategy for division action re nation-wide priority with input from chapters	Establish strategy for division action re nation-wide priority with input from chapters
	Advocate to provincial legislators & policy/ program officials	Advocate to provincial legislators & policy/ program officials	Advocate to provincial legislators & policy/ program officials	Advocate to provincial legislators & policy/ program officials	Advocate to provincial legislators & policy/ program officials	Advocate to provincial legislators & policy/ program officials
	Work with &/or develop coalitions					
	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data					
	Support nation-wide priority including MP meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide priority including MP meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide priority including MP meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide priority including MP meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide priority including MP meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide priority including MP meetings, as requested
	Support chapters as requested					
						

Framework for Government Relations and Advocacy

MS Society Priorities	Income Security	Caregiver Issues	Healthcare Access	Community Access	Research Funding	Charitable Sector
Chapters/ Units/ Communities¹	Provide input into nation-wide priority via division					
	Provide input into division priority					
	Establish chapter ¹ priority & strategy	Establish chapter priority & strategy	Establish chapter priority & strategy	Establish chapter priority & strategy		
	Advocate to municipal councillors & policy/ program officials	Advocate to municipal councillors & policy/ program officials	Advocate to municipal councillors & policy/ program officials	Advocate to municipal councillors & policy/ program officials		
	Work with &/or develop coalitions					
	Collect, analyze, utilize appropriate information & data					
	Support nation-wide / division priority including MP &/or provincial legislator meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide / division priority including MP &/or provincial legislator meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide / division priority including MP &/or provincial legislator meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide / division priority including MP &/or provincial legislator meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide / division priority including MP &/or provincial legislator meetings, as requested	Support nation-wide / division priority including MP &/or provincial legislator meetings, as requested

1 The reference to “chapter” also means units and communities, in areas where chapters and units do not exist.