

Reach 338 - Your personal toolkit

ABOUT REACH 338

Thank you for signing up to be part of this project!

Reach 338 will ensure our advocacy work reaches all 338 federal ridings in a meaningful way. Whether it's through a one-on-one meeting, a community event, a letter, or simply a phone call – Reach 338 will make certain the National Association of Federal Retirees and our key priorities are seen and understood by every single sitting member of Parliament.

The key to making Reach 338 possible and effective is empowering our members and supporters to advocate where they'll have the biggest impact – in their own communities. Local voices give context, a face to the issue, and a personal story that gives a relatable, human perspective to our priorities. Service to others is the highest calling a person can have, and the members of our Association have spent their working lives in service to Canada. A show of strength and shared focus amongst federal retirees from all walks of life focused on the same mission – to significantly improve the quality and security of retirement – makes a lasting and positive impact.

ABOUT THIS KIT

This kit will give you the tools you need to work independently within your community to support Reach 338 and help the National Association of Federal Retirees reach its goals.

This kit includes:

- Developing your “personal story” and how to incorporate it into your work
- How to use “Add Your Name” sheets and our online form to gather support and momentum
- How to host a coffee party to recruit others to the campaign
- How to write and submit a letter-to-the-editor
- Where to find additional information and materials

Remember, the Association's Advocacy Team are here to help. If you have questions about this kit, this project, or anything else, please email advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca.



CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

1-855-304-4700 | advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca

federalretirees.ca



National Association
of Federal Retirees

Association nationale
des retraités fédéraux

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

When it comes to volunteering, everyone has a different reason for becoming involved – from remaining active and connected to their community, or to give back and help others. When your volunteer work centres around advocacy and advancing good policy, the reasons for becoming involved are often much more personal. Understanding why we care about the work we do and what has inspired us to take action is important – it helps keep us motivated to keep going, and it helps us relate the importance of the issues to others.

In developing our materials, our team at the national office relies on a lot research and data to support our advocacy on our four key issue areas: retirement income security, a national seniors strategy, support for veterans and their families, and pharmacare. Of course, having solid research and data is essential to making your case in support of good policy – but all the numbers and jargon can make it a bit mind-boggling, as well as impersonal and irrelevant, to the average person who doesn't know or care much about the issue. What makes an issue relevant is the people impacted by it.

As a member of the National Association of Federal Retirees and our Reach 338 team, you have joined our organization and this project to advance one or more of our key issues. Why? Tapping into your story and experience will help you better understand your motivations and communicate them to others in hopes of inspiring them to join our campaign.

DEVELOPING YOUR “PERSONAL STORY”

When developing your personal story to support your advocacy work, there are a few important questions to consider:

- **Who are you?** How would you introduce yourself to someone? What about you makes this issue you care about relevant to you?
 - ▶ For example – If you are advocating for a National Seniors Strategy, you may want to introduce yourself by saying, “My name is Marie. I spent most of my working life in Ontario, but I’ve recently retired and moved to New Brunswick with my husband.”
- **What inspired you to act?** Was there a defining moment that helped you realize the importance of the issue? Did it happen to you, or to someone else?
 - ▶ For example – “Shortly after we moved to New Brunswick, my husband encountered some health challenges that required some additional care. I had some experience navigating those systems in Ontario when I was caring for my mother – but the system in New Brunswick was different. We talk a lot about ‘free healthcare’ in Canada, and I had always assumed that I could get the same level of care regardless of where we lived. I was shocked to discover this wasn’t the case.”
- **What did you do about it?** After having your moment of inspiration, what did you do? What action did you take to support your cause?
 - ▶ For example – “Once my husband’s care was finally arranged, I started looking into this more. I started talking to friends and neighbours, both in Ontario and New Brunswick, about what I had discovered. I realized that this was a huge issue for a lot of my loved ones, but I wasn’t sure what to do. Then one day I was flipping through Sage magazine, and I noticed articles talking about a National Seniors Strategy and the Association’s campaign – and I knew I needed to get involved, because a National Seniors Strategy would have helped my husband and me.”
- **What was the result?** What happened as a result of you taking action? What differences are you seeing as a result of your advocacy?
 - ▶ For example – “I went to the Association’s website and checked out all the tools available to me to help raise this issue. I printed off some leaflets and started talking to everyone I could think of about the issue, and I found that a lot of folks thought it was a good idea but had never heard of a “National Seniors Strategy” before. So, I started posting on Facebook about it, and talking to even more people. I emailed my MP, and was pleasantly surprised that I got a response and that they knew what I was talking about! They mentioned that they were hearing about this from other community members too. While there is still a long way to go in order to implement a strategy like this, I can see that the level of awareness in my community is really increasing. I feel hopeful that with this attention on the issue and decision makers talking about a National Seniors Strategy, that the issues my husband and I faced won’t be so difficult for folks in the future.”

Developing your personal story will take time. Start working on it by jotting some notes down on a piece of paper, and come back to them several times as you continue to ponder the questions above. Once you have answered all the questions, stitch them together into a narrative.

For example – *“My name is Phillip. I have two kids, and we all live in the Ottawa area. I worked for the Canada Revenue Agency for my entire career, and as a result have relatively good drug coverage, even in retirement. My youngest son is grown and working in the private sector.”*

“Both my son and I have diabetes, which requires us to take medication daily to maintain our health. Because I’ve always had good drug coverage, I’ve never really thought much about how much that medication costs. As my son has started his own career and moved between different employers as he advances, he has really struggled to cover the cost of his medication. His level of coverage and consistency of coverage has really varied, which surprised me a lot. You hear a lot about how drug prices have gone up, but I didn’t realize how bad it was until my son told me how tough it was for him to sometimes make the choice between filling his prescription and buying groceries.”

“Over the past couple of years, the idea of a national pharmacare program has been bounced around by a lot of politicians. I never paid much attention to it until I realized how much it could help my son, and that there were a lot of folks who were in the same boat. I started thinking about it – it’s great to be able to see a doctor without getting a huge bill at the end, but if you can’t afford the treatment, then what’s the point? I started paying attention and reading everything I could about these national pharmacare plans the political parties were talking about.”

“During the last election, I received an invitation from my branch of Federal Retirees to attend a meet and greet with federal candidates in my riding. I normally would avoid those sorts of things, but I wanted to hear what they had to say on this issue. I spoke to my local candidates about pharmacare, and I realized I wasn’t the only person in the room that was keen to hear their answers. I was thrilled to see the Association also considered pharmacare a priority – so I took some of the printed materials available at the event and started talking to my friends and family about it. While this issue is far from resolved, I know my candidates and MPs know how important this issue is, and I’ve been following their work on the issue since they’ve been back in Ottawa.”

Not everyone’s personal story will be the same, and not everyone’s personal story will answer the questions above in the same way. What’s most important is to relay **why the issue is important to you**. This is what makes the issue relatable to others and what will inspire them to join your cause. Weaving your personal story into your advocacy work will soon become second nature, and will make your tasks easier and more effective.

“ADD YOUR NAME”

For nearly every campaign we run, we put together “add your name” tools. Available both online and on paper, these forms aim to provide a quick and easy way for folks to pledge their support to the Association’s priorities and to stay in the loop on what’s happening on those key issues.

Additionally, this information is helpful when meeting with Members of Parliament and other elected officials in relaying the importance and reach of an issue. For example, it is much more impactful to say, “Over 1,000 people who live in your riding have signed onto our campaign in support of a National Seniors Strategy,” than to simply say, “A National Seniors Strategy is important.” We will also make sure that folks who have signed on in support of our key issues or campaigns are kept up to date on what we’re working on via email. These folks will also have the opportunity to get involved in Reach 338.

As part of our Reach 338 team, you can help gather names in support of our key issues. Below, you will find some helpful tips and tactics to gather support using our paper “add your name” sheets and our online forms. We recognize it is not practical to use paper forms while social distancing - for now, please focus on online forms.

Online forms

- Share on social media. A simple post will do, but don’t be afraid to be creative! Tag friends and family members you think might be interested. You can also complement your post with a link to the form with any number of articles or content found on www.federalretirees.ca – this can help further demonstrate why the issue is important and why you’re supporting our campaigns. We are constantly releasing new material on our website and on the Association’s Facebook page – so check back often to find new content to share on your own page regularly to keep the issue front-and-centre.
- Send an email. Not everyone is on social media, but most people do have access to email. While we are all filtering through dozens of emails from stores and organizations, a personal note from a friend always stands out.

Paper forms

- Always carry them with you! Print a few copies to have in your bag or your car. You never know when you will be chatting with someone and discover an opportunity to discuss the project and ask for their support.
- Talk to family and friends. As these are the people closest

to you, they are most likely to understand why the issue is so important to you and sign on to support you.

- Knock on some doors. This might sound a bit intimidating – but it doesn’t have to be! There is a reason that many groups, from charities to political campaigns, gather support using this tactic – it’s easy and it works. Having one-on-one conversations with folks about an issue is a very effective way of building awareness, which in turn leads to support. If you are interested in trying out this tactic, you can also download some leave-behind materials that you can distribute to people you talk to.

Whether you’re gathering support on paper or online, make sure to use your personal story to shape your pitch. This is the unique personal touch that you bring to the campaign that makes it so relatable, relevant and successful.

HOSTING A COFFEE PARTY

Another option for gathering support is hosting a coffee party. Coffee parties are casual events where a small group (5-10 people recommended) get together with a host (you!) to hear about a key issue, chat about the issue and why it’s important, and make plans to spread the word in their own networks. Having this sort of get-together is not unlike having a book club meeting. And the great part about these events are that they can just as easily be held virtually over a video call!

Generally, coffee parties are hosted in your home and the attendees are your friends and family (and sometimes their friends and family). Serving light refreshments (such as coffee and cookies) is common, but you should feel free to serve (or not serve) whatever you feel comfortable with. Think of the event less like “work”, and more like a social activity (with an agenda!). Normally, in-person coffee parties are preferred; however, they can just as easily be held virtually to practice social distancing. As the host, you set up a video call (using a platform such as Zoom) and invite friends and family to join you from their homes. These can be especially great as an opportunity to come together to discuss important advocacy issues at a time when many of us are staying apart.

At the event, make sure you set at least 30 minutes aside specifically for sharing information about the key issue and asking people to join the cause. We have put together lots of great, informative materials that you can share with your guests, but keep in mind the most effective tool you have to get folks on board – your personal story. Share your personal story with your guests, share some additional facts and figures (as provided in our materials), and then ask folks to sign on in support.

Not only should you be looking to collect signatures on an “add your name” sheet, but you should be prepared to provide blank copies so that your attendees can spread the word in their own networks.

If you are interested in hosting a coffee party and would like to chat about how to set one up, want some advice or help in developing your “pitch” for the party, or tips on how to host a virtual party, please contact us at advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca. We are happy to walk you through the process and make sure you’re confident and ready to go!

LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR

If you’re more comfortable writing than making a presentation, submitting a letter-to-the-editor to your local newspaper or media outlet is another great option. While this method won’t directly generate support, it helps raise awareness of the key issue and why it’s important to you and your community.

But, before you start writing, do a bit of research on your local media outlets. Think about any local newspapers or online news sources you read and the ones you know are commonly read in your community. Check out their website and look for links to their editorial department or newsroom. Here, you should be able to find an email address where you can send your completed letter. The publication’s website may also include some helpful information to keep in mind, such as maximum word count. Even if it is not listed, it is generally a good idea to keep your letter as brief as possible – under 250 words. If your letter is too long, the publication may edit it (which could dilute your message) or ignore it entirely.

Once you know where you are submitting your letter and what their requirements are, it’s time to get writing. We have put together letter-to-the-editor templates for many of our key campaigns. Simply download the document (see “Additional Materials” section in this toolkit) and make edits to incorporate your personal story and to put the letter into your own words or “voice”. All of our templates will include helpful facts and figures, and will specify exactly where you can and should make edits. Again, leverage your personal story to describe why the issue is important to you and why people should take action.

After you’ve finished your writing, make sure you proof-read your work carefully. Ask a friend to read it over, or even email a copy to us at advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca – we’re happy to help! This is a really important step that absolutely should not be skipped – typing and grammatical errors will

lower the likelihood of your letter being printed. Take your time, and make sure your letter is perfect before emailing it in.

When you do submit your letter, be sure to ask the publication to confirm receipt and ask when you can expect it to be published. If you don’t hear back within a day or two, follow up. Polite persistence will make sure your hard work is noticed, and therefore more likely to be printed. If it is printed or published online, be sure to send a copy to advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca so we can brag about your great work!

Keep in mind, some bigger publications receive dozens of submissions per day – and not every single one will be published. If your first submission isn’t accepted, don’t be discouraged. Ask the publication for any tips or suggestions to improve your next letter and then try, try again. The more often you submit, the more likely you will be published!

SNAP A SELFIE

We love to showcase the work our team is doing in communities from coast-to-coast. We often publish photos of our teams doing their advocacy work on our website, social media, and sometimes in Sage magazine – but we need you to remember to take the photo in order to do it!

Here are a few tips for taking a great photo (and what to do with it afterwards):

- Use your cell phone! Cell phone cameras are often high-quality and nearly everyone has one in their pocket. If you have a digital camera – that can also work well.
- Take the highest resolution photo possible. If your phone or camera has settings for quality, always use the highest quality setting you can.
- Selfies are great, but ask for help if you can! If you are in a coffee shop or public space, don't hesitate to ask a staff person or another patron to snap a quick photo of you doing your work! This could be you chatting with friends and family about the issue, a fun photo at your coffee party, or even you working away on your letter.
- Send us the photo! Simply email your photo to advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca. Don't forget to include the names of everyone in the photo, as well as the date your meeting took place, as well as any other relevant information.
- Share the photo! If you use Facebook or Twitter, don't hesitate to share the photo on your own profile and show off your hard work! If you are using Twitter, be sure to tag us [@fedretirees](https://twitter.com/fedretirees) so that we can retweet you!

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

We want to make sure you have everything you need to succeed! That's why we have put together a variety of materials to help you prepare for your meeting.

As a member of the National Association of Federal Retirees, you can login to our website and access additional toolkits, background information and talking points, recorded training sessions, and interactive online learning tools to help you get ready.

Simply visit www.federalretirees.ca and click on the "Log In" link in the upper right-hand corner of the web page. From here you can login with your membership ID and password, or set up a new account. Once logged in, you will see a menu on the left-hand side of your screen. Click on "My Membership", and on the next page click on "My Documents". Under the "Member Documents" drop down, you will see a special folder for Reach 338. Here, you will find everything you need to succeed!

If you are having trouble logging in or creating an account, please email advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca.

SUBMIT YOUR RESULTS

Don't forget to share your results with us! All of those support you gathered on your "add your name" sheets won't do the campaign any good if they sit in the bottom of your bag or on your kitchen counter for weeks. You can scan and email your pages to advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca, or package them up and mail them to: *National Association of Federal Retirees, c/o the Advocacy Team, 865 Shefford Road, Ottawa ON, K1J 1H9.*

THANK YOU

Reach 338 is an important project for the National Association of Federal Retirees. Together we are making a big impact by building, strong, effective local relationships with Canada's House of Commons – and we couldn't dream of achieving this goal without you. Thank you.

Your local Advocacy Program Officer and the Advocacy Team are here to help you. If you have any questions about this guide or any of our materials, please contact us at advocacyteam@federalretirees.ca.