

Leadership Skills

MODULE 4: PUBLIC SPEAKING

As a candidate, you need to win votes. Although campaigning door-to-door and having personal conversations with voters is an effective means to win votes, you cannot, and should not, avoid public speaking opportunities. Indeed, these may be the most beneficial forum to prove why you are the best candidate for an elected position.

According to the Fearless Challenge survey funded by the Canadian Cancer Society in 2015, 1,500 Canadians over the age of 18 were asked what their greatest phobias were. The top five fears for both men and women include:

WOMEN	MEN
Spiders (40%)	Snakes (33%)
Natural disasters (40%)	Heights (31%)
Heights (37%)	Public Speaking (28%)
Public speaking (37%)	Spiders (21%)
Snakes (35%)	Tight spaces (20%)
Mice/rats (35%)	Natural disasters (20%)

While the majority of Canadians admitted to having a fear they felt was irrational, another 62% have actively taken steps to confront their fears head-on with a 72% success rate. This is great news for those who can relate to a fear of public speaking in this workshop. If you work at managing your fear, you have a high likelihood of working towards overcoming your fear of public speaking.

The best way to hone your public speaking skills is to do public speaking. The more you speak in public to audiences, the more comfortable you will feel over time. There are many opportunities to address a group, including community meetings, community council meetings, conferences, candidate forums, radio, social media and at special events. As a candidate, you should be actively looking for opportunities to speak to groups—even if the thought of doing so is scary.

Fear

Studies show that by focusing on the things that we're afraid of and using our rational minds to explore those fears, we can significantly reduce the way that we experience our fears. List all of the things about public speaking that you are afraid of - the 'what ifs'...

Activity 1: Public Speaking Skills

1. What type of public speaking events will you be speaking at if you are running in an election?

2. What qualities do strong public speakers demonstrate in those types of events you listed above?

Activity 2: Developing Public Speaking Skills

You are invited to practice your public speaking skills and to speak about why you would make an ideal candidate for an elected position within your community. To help you craft your speech, answer the following questions:

1. Who are you?

2. Why are you qualified to be an elected representative?

3. Why are you running for the position?

4. What are you proposing to do to improve the lives of citizens?

5. What is at risk if people don't support your candidacy (things will remain the same, problems will not be addressed, etc.)?

You may use notes to assist you with your speech but don't forget that connecting with the audience is an important element to speaking as a candidate who is looking to win votes.

Be prepared to evaluate yourself once you're done and to hear some feedback from your colleagues.

Things to keep in mind:

- Make eye contact while speaking
- Speed of speech, pacing, etc
- Pause when you need to instead of using a filler such as, “um’s” or “ah’s”
- Make your hands visible – and use them with your body language
- Make sure your voice can be heard from the person farthest away from you
- Use a conversational tone
- Avoid sarcasm as it’s often misinterpreted
- Be brief to hold the attention of others

Are there other tips that you can suggest of effective political speakers that you have observed? List them below:

Summary

When running for any elected position, public speaking can be one of your greatest assets. It helps people to connect with you and what you stand for. The most powerful and persuasive public speakers come across as passionate and genuine so if you’re clear on your campaign and why people should elect you, be sure that your message doesn’t get muted by your fear of public speaking. Take advantage of any opportunity to get in front of people and the more you do it, the easier and more natural it will become over time.
