

**Election 2004 Toolkit**  
**Demand the Canada You Want**



The federal election is an important time to lobby politicians on the issues that are important to you. Political candidates are apt to make promises while on the campaign trail, and are likely to be more receptive to your questions and demands.

These documents are designed to help you hit the streets, organize meetings, garner media attention, and get your message out.

The future of this country is unwritten and the pen is now in our hands.

**Never has it been so important to get involved - for the Canada You Want.**



## **Voting in the federal election: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

(with information from *Elections Canada and Rush the Vote*)

Did you know that only 25% of eligible voters aged 18 to 30 voted in the last federal election?

Never has it been so important to vote. In the last federal election, just over half of Canadians eligible to vote did so. Voter apathy is understandable; lack of trust in the politicians and the means by which their policies are adopted is understandable, but it is essential that more people participate in the electoral process and work toward its transformation. We must have faith that the political process can effect change ... If you want to know who is going to change this country, just look in the mirror.

— Maude Barlow

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### **How can I find out if I'm registered to vote?**

Contact Elections Canada at:

- 1 800 463- 6868 (toll-free in Canada and the United States)
- 011 800 514-6868 (toll-free in Mexico)
- (613) 993-2975 (from anywhere in the world)
- TTY 1 800 361-8936 (for people who are deaf or hard of hearing – toll-free in Canada and the US)

### **I moved since the last federal election. Am I still registered to vote?**

If you have recently moved, your name will still be registered, but you may need to update your address. Elections Canada updates the [National Register of Electors](#) from a number of sources, so your address may have been updated already. Contact Elections Canada to be sure.

### **What is my electoral district?**

You can look it up at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca), by calling Elections Canada.

### **Can I vote if I am in prison?**

Canadians who have reached the age of 18 by polling day and who are currently in a correctional institution or a federal penitentiary in Canada may vote by special ballot in a federal election or referendum regardless of the length of their sentences. A staff member in each institution is appointed liaison officer to facilitate the process of registering and voting. The liaison officer answers questions about the manner of voting and helps the electors to register.

### **Can a person who is homeless vote?**

Yes, an elector who is homeless or without a fixed address can vote, if he or she registers on the voters list during an election. To register, the elector must provide proof of identity and the address where he or she is staying.

Proof of identity can be an official document bearing the elector's name and signature. For residence, the address of a local shelter is acceptable, if the elector slept there in the last 24 hours. Without such proof, a person who is homeless can register on Election Day by taking the prescribed oath as to identity and residence, as long as another voter who is registered in the same electoral district can vouch for that person.

### **I am a university student – where do I vote?**

You can vote in either the riding where you are living while attending university, or your "home riding." Contact Elections Canada to make sure that you are registered to vote in whatever riding you choose.

### **What if I can't make it to my polling place on Election Day?**

You can vote by Special Ballot. Contact Elections Canada to register.

### **How do I find information on the candidates?**

- For The Council of Canadians' analysis of where the four major parties stand on key issues, check out our voter's guide at: [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org).
- Elections Canada keeps an updated list of the websites of all registered political parties at: [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).
- The Centre for Social Justice recently launched a voter education campaign: [www.voteforachange.ca](http://www.voteforachange.ca). The website features fact sheets and analysis on a range of social, legal, labour and environmental issues.



## HOW TO ORGANIZE AN ALL-CANDIDATES MEETING

The federal election is an important time to lobby politicians on the issues that are important to you. Political candidates are apt to make promises while on the campaign trail, and are likely to be more receptive to your questions and demands. One of the best ways to reach people during the election is to hold an all-candidates meeting in your neighbourhood.

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### Key decisions when planning a debate

Many Council chapters include more than one riding. While it would be helpful to hold a candidates' debate in every riding, this is likely not possible. Consider partnering with local community organizations that might already be planning a candidates' meeting, and save your energy for the ridings where there isn't a meeting taking place. You might also want to target a riding where a particular candidate holds a position of power within the current government. You may also want to consider:

- The riding with the largest population
- A riding where there is a "hot" issue – the construction of a P3 hospital, or the development of a hog farm, for example
- A "swing riding," where the incumbent candidate faces hefty opposition.

### Planning the event

1. **Assemble a team of volunteers.** This can include other chapter members, as well as members of partner organizations. When forming an organizing committee, a small group of three to five people works best. But you will also need to recruit people to put up posters, circulate flyers, contact the media, set-up chairs, purchase refreshments, and all sorts of other jobs. If there is a college or a university in your riding, think of ways to get young people involved.
2. **Select a moderator.** This person will be crucial to the success of the meeting. Select a person with known community ties, who has good facilitation skills. Some examples might include:
  - A local media personality
  - An actor or theatre performer
  - A retired politician
  - A community volunteer.

Make sure that your moderator has a good grasp of the issues, is able to treat candidates fairly, and is able to enforce the procedures for the debate. It is important that you ensure that the moderator is not involved in any of the candidates' political campaigns, and is not publicly aligned with any political party.

3. **Contact the candidates.** For an up-to-date list of the candidates running in your riding, consult the Elections Canada website (<http://www.elections.ca>). Be sure to follow-up telephone invitations with a letter.
  
4. **Find a location.** Community centres, churches, libraries and universities often offer spaces for free (or for a small fee). When you book a space, you should consider some of the following features:
  - Access to public transportation
  - Parking
  - Accessibility (for example, a wheelchair access ramp)
  - Acoustics
  - Number of seats.
  
5. **Draw a crowd.** Here are some techniques:
  - Ask members to invite others. Eighty per cent of volunteers doing community work said they began because a friend, family member, or a neighbour asked them.
  - Drop off flyers and put up posters at meetings of other groups, seniors' homes, community centres, libraries, cafés, and other places where people gather.
  - Knock on doors. Remember to wear a nametag, and encourage people to "knock their own blocks." Bring lots of copies of pamphlets advertising your event. Never door-knock alone. Always go out in teams of two or three people.
  - Place free public service announcements in community newspapers, and on local radio and television shows. Make sure to check out when the deadlines are!
  
6. **Keep track of their promises.** Appoint a secretary, and either record the meeting, or take careful notes. Note any policy positions expressed, or promises made by the candidates present at your meeting. You can use these statements in your future lobbying efforts.

### **KEEP US IN THE LOOP!**

Let us know about the election-related actions you're planning. Keep track of candidates' statements on the campaign trail, and contact Ariel Troster at 1-800-387-7177. \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to be contacted by the Council of Canadians chapter in your area, please phone Sandra Beauseigle at 1-800-387-7177

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## Canada votes 2004 - "Questions re. NAFTA Chapter 11"

In Canada's federal elections in 2004, private is being pitted against public in areas such as health care, auto insurance and the postal system. Largely missing from candidates' statements is any recognition of the dangers posed by 'free trade' to any future plans to reform or renew Canada's health care system, or to enact new public policy. This threat is coming from trade provisions contained in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), in force since January 1, 1994.

### **Two questions for candidates given the threat to Medicare posed by the NAFTA accord:**

NAFTA's Chapter 11 allows US investors to sue governments for public policies that a company feels may curb its profits, even those policies that protect public health.

- If elected to parliament, would you act to remove Chapter 11 from NAFTA?

Roy Romanow's health-care blueprint urges the federal government to "ensure that future international trade agreements make explicit allowance for both maintaining and expanding publicly insured, financed and delivered health care".

- If elected, would you push for legislation enabling the government of Canada to protect its right to regulate health care policy without being subject to claims for compensation from foreign-based companies?

### **A question to pose to candidates about public auto insurance:**

Public auto insurance is 'permitted' in those provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec and British Columbia) where it pre-exists NAFTA service and investment provisions. However US insurance companies can now invoke NAFTA Chapter 11 to seek compensation if any other provinces bring in a public system. An all-party committee in New Brunswick is currently recommending the introduction of public auto insurance. Other provinces may follow suit.

- If elected, would you push for changes in Canada's existing trade treaty commitments to allow provinces like New Brunswick to opt for public auto insurance?

### **A question to pose to candidates regarding the UPS NAFTA claim against Canada:**

US transnational United Parcel Services (UPS) is suing Canada for US\$ 160 million. UPS says that its investments are being limited by Canada's publicly funded network of mailboxes and post offices. It claims that this network gives our public post office an unfair advantage when delivering courier services that are in competition with private courier services.

- If elected, would you stand up for Canada's sovereign right to have this matter decided in Canada's parliament or in Canadian courts, instead of allowing an unaccountable tribunal in Washington decide the fate of Canada's public postal system?

***About Common Frontiers:***

*Common Frontiers is a multi-sectoral organization involving churches, unions, international development organizations and social organizations. Common Frontiers opposes NAFTA and is particularly demanding the removal of Chapter 11.*

*Besides the impact Chapter 11 provisions may have on public policy in Canada, Common Frontiers is concerned that similar investor-state provisions are being forced on fragile economies in our hemisphere as part of the Free Trade Area of the Americas negotiations currently under way.*



## ELECTIONS 2004: MEDIA KIT

Elections provide an excellent opportunity for Council activists to get their message out. Chapters have the unique ability to work with local media outlets, build relationships with reporters, and ensure that issues such as safe food, fair trade, clean water and public health don't get lost in the fray.

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### DEFINITIONS AND DEADLINES

- A **public service announcement (PSA)** is intended to be distributed to media outlets for use in promoting your event to the public.
  - Identify the media which does PSAs and check their deadlines – magazines or bi-weeklies may be as much as two or three weeks before event, while radio or TV may only be 2-3 days before the event. Also use for broadcast fax and e-mail.
- A **media advisory** is intended to get media out to your event (press conference, rally, public forum, etc).
  - If appropriate for your event, send during the week prior to the event. If your event is on the weekend, send the advisory on Wednesday. If it's a weeknight event, send the advisory 2-3 days beforehand.
- A **press release** is intended to give reporters the information they need to write a story (and ideally call you for further information).
  - If appropriate for your event, send the day of the event. Your aim is to gain attention for the event and to give media idea of what is newsworthy about story.

### TIPS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are a way to get your message out on radio or television. Most local electronic media outlets have a community calendar or designated time for event announcements.

PSAs can be helpful for getting people out to your event, but there is no guarantee they will be used, so don't rely on them to fill the auditorium. They are only one of your outreach and publicity tools.

They should be written in a way that you would imagine them read live on-air — they are a script rather than a press release. Though they may not get read exactly the way you write them, often times they will be.

- Make sure to cover who, what, where, when and how.
- Include contact information that you're willing to have broadcast, and make sure the contact person can be easily reached

## **DISTRIBUTION**

- Call the local papers, television and radio stations to find out who to direct your information to.
- Call after you've sent it to confirm that it was received. Don't pester them though – media outlets don't generally return calls – they get lots of calls from people like us every day and don't often have time to return them and still get their jobs done. Be patient.

### **[SAMPLE] PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

run until [fill in day of event here]

contact name  
 contact phone  
 contact fax  
 contact email

#### **Citizen's groups to hold all-candidates meeting**

As the Liberal government recovers from its latest scandal, grassroots community groups are urging Canadians to vote for candidates who favour citizens' rights over corporate interests.

This is why the [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians will be holding an all-candidates meeting on [date] to encourage candidates to clarify their platforms, and debate the issues that are important to Canadians. The evening is open to the public.

If you are interested, the debate begins at [time event starts], at the [venue]. Doors open at [time]. Admission is free of charge.

For more information contact [name] at [phone number].

## **TIPS FOR MEDIA ADVISORIES**

If you choose to open your event to the media, you absolutely need to send a **media advisory** about your local event (sample below). Use your judgment as to when or whether to send this out. It could be as early as two or three weeks before your event, or as late as a few days before your event, depending on the nature of the media outlets you send it to (weekly publications need more lead-time, for example). In any case, the follow-up calls are crucial to getting their attention.

When you call, suggest to reporters that they could do the story to run before the workshops, if they can't make it during the workshops.

Depending on your specific plans you may need to adapt this advisory or send another one on a different day if there are any planned actions that come out of the workshops.

One of the biggest mistakes local groups make with media work is not being available when the media calls. Reporters don't have time to wait and will often call you, then call someone else to get a quote. If you miss the call you can miss the story. Make sure your contact is available at the number on your materials from first thing in the morning into the evening. Return any messages from journalists as promptly as possible.

**[SAMPLE] MEDIA ADVISORY - May 15, 2004**

**Citizen's groups to hold all-candidates meeting**

**WHO:** The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians

**WHAT:** A meeting designed to give federal candidates in the [your city] riding a chance to clarify their platforms, and answer tough questions from concerned citizens.

**WHEN:** [date and time of event]

**WHERE:** [VENUE]

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For more information, or to arrange an interview in advance, contact [your contact info].

## **TIPS FOR PRESS RELEASES**

Below is a template you can use and adapt for your press release. You may want to write your own press release to reflect local realities and issues. Or you may wish to adapt the following to send to contacts on your non-media list.

Keep in mind when you write your release what makes a story newsworthy: dramatic human interest, controversy, local angles, calendar tie-ins, anniversaries and major events to name a few. Also be aware of health care issues and stories that are being debated in your community.

Frame the story, and your release, so it has significance, drama, timeliness and impact for viewers, listeners, and readers.

**[SAMPLE] PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2004

**Citizens grill candidates at community meeting**

(your community) As the Liberal government recovers from its latest scandal, grassroots community groups urged Canadians to vote for candidates who favour citizens' rights over corporate interests.

At a meet-the-candidates meeting sponsored by the [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians, residents took candidates to task for their parties' record on issues ranging from health care to privatization of social services.

"We have had enough of corporate collusion in the workings of government," said Joe Activist, a long-time resident of [your community]. "In the midst of the current sponsorship scandal, the right-wing lobby is trying to convince people that we need less government. What we really need is accountable government."

Chapter members will be going door-to-door in [your community], to distribute a copy of the Council of Canadians' Voter's Guide, which outlines the major parties' positions on issues such as food safety, trade and Canada-US relations.

For more information contact [name] at [phone number].

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**TIPS FOR MAKING MEDIA CALLS**

Follow-up calls to reporters, or "pitching" can make or break getting your story in the news. Reporters receive dozens of press releases a day, and your call can help make your event stand out from the pack. It's not always easy, though.

Canadian reporters receive an average of 25 pitches a day, and follow up on 2-3. In today's newsroom, deadlines are tight and resources are often scarce. Take some time before you call to formulate your thoughts. Try and imagine what might get an overworked reporter's attention.

These tips are designed to demystify the news-making process, and help you get your message across.

**Target your reporter**

Your best bet is to call reporters you know, or have worked with in the past. If they can't cover the story, they'll likely refer you to someone else.

If you have no prior connection with a particular media outlet, find out who is covering the elections "beat." Keep track of all of your media contacts, including phone, fax and email addresses.

**Be timely, not obnoxious.**

Do not call reporters when you know they are on deadline. Mid-morning and early afternoon are good times to make pitches. Be sensitive to their moods. If they sound rushed, offer to call back later. If you get the answering machine, leave the basics and call back at a better time.

**Express Enthusiasm**

When it comes to pitching you're competing with a long line of other callers. You need to sound like you believe in and have confidence in the story.

**Hooks Galore**

What makes a story newsworthy? Again, it's dramatic human interest, controversy, local angles, calendar tie-ins, anniversaries and major events. Frame the story so it has significance, drama, timeliness and impact for viewers, listeners, and readers.

**Anticipate and Answer Questions**

Take some time to think through the likely questions and their answers.

**Have a back-up plan**

If it becomes clear a reporter isn't interested, have a different angle ready. For example, if the reporter can't make it to the event, they might want to interview a speaker or organizer at a different time. Don't overdo it.

**RESOURCES AND TUTORIALS**

For more information on working with the media go to the Council of Canadians' *Action Link: A Guide for Council Activists*:

- Using the Media  
[http://www.canadians.org/documents/using\\_media.pdf](http://www.canadians.org/documents/using_media.pdf)
- Media Releases  
[http://www.canadians.org/documents/media\\_release.pdf](http://www.canadians.org/documents/media_release.pdf)

Other great resources for activist-based media work:

**The Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society's Media Communications Tool Kit**

[http://www.impacs.org/pdfs/communications\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.impacs.org/pdfs/communications_toolkit.pdf)

**The Spin Project's Media Tutorials**

<http://www.spinproject.org/resources/tutorials.php3>

**The Media Trust's online media guides**

[http://www.mediatrust.org/online\\_guides/index.html](http://www.mediatrust.org/online_guides/index.html)