

Producing written materials

Some tactics are better suited to you than others. The key is to find out what you like to do, then do it well. Some of the most common tactics involve drafting and presenting written materials. These can be anything from individuals writing letters, to teams writing and presenting government briefs. The Council has encouraged and directly participated in both of these tactics many times over the years.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, A LETTER WRITTEN BY HAND OFTEN CARRIES MORE WEIGHT THAN ONE OF THOSE MASS-PRODUCED JOBS.



Writing letters

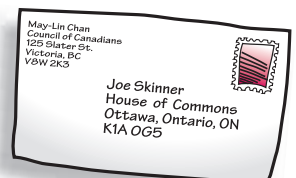
Some organizations, such as Amnesty International, focus almost entirely on letter-writing campaigns, and they've had dramatic success. One of the great things about letter writing is that anyone on their own can do it. Letters can be written to just about anyone—a government representative, a newspaper, the head of a company. Before writing your letter, be sure of your intentions. Do you want to inform a group of people? Are you looking for answers to questions? Do you want certain actions explained or justified? Whatever it is, if you're clear about your goal before you begin, the letter will be clearer and much more effective. Here are some basic tips for writing a successful letter.



A handwritten letter can carry more weight

It may sound strange in this age of computerized everything, but when you write a letter to your public official, consider writing it by hand. A handwritten letter is actually a very powerful tool! Elected officials generally assume that for every phone call, note or letter they receive, there are about 100 other people who feel the same. A handwritten letter or note tells the official that you are very concerned about the issue. Letters that are mass-produced suggest you don't care enough to put in the effort, so they don't hold as much weight.

- ➔ **Be brief.** One or two short paragraphs is usually enough, regardless of the complexity of the issue. Keep the letter to a page at the most.
- ➔ **Be factual.** Back up your arguments and include only relevant information.
- ➔ **Request a response.** Politely ask for a response to your letter.
- ➔ **Always identify yourself.** In the letter and on the envelope, be sure to identify yourself, as well as your position if you are writing this letter as a member of a group.



Leafletting

LEAFLETTING CAN BE A GOOD WAY TO GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT TO A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE



Leafletting can be a good way to get your message out to a large number of people—one person can give out dozens of leaflets in an hour. Leafletting allows almost total control over the message you're sending out, and it's often a good way of introducing your campaign and chapter to people or publicizing an upcoming event.

To increase your chances of creating an effective leaflet, keep these things in mind: Write a leaflet that

isn't too wordy but still talks about all of the elements of your group or campaign. Emphasize the fun or upbeat aspects of the event. Be sure to leaflet wherever the people you're hoping to attract may gather, and at a time when they might be there. Have more than one person leafletting at once. Be ready for rejections—many people will ignore you, and some will even make nasty remarks. Just keep smiling and remember all the people who **are** reading what you give them.

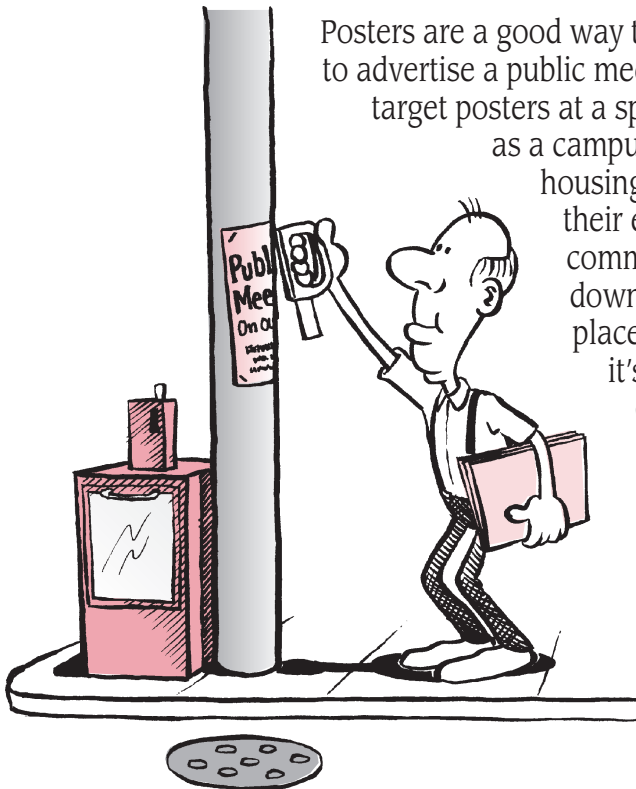
BUT IT CAN HAVE DRAWBACKS!

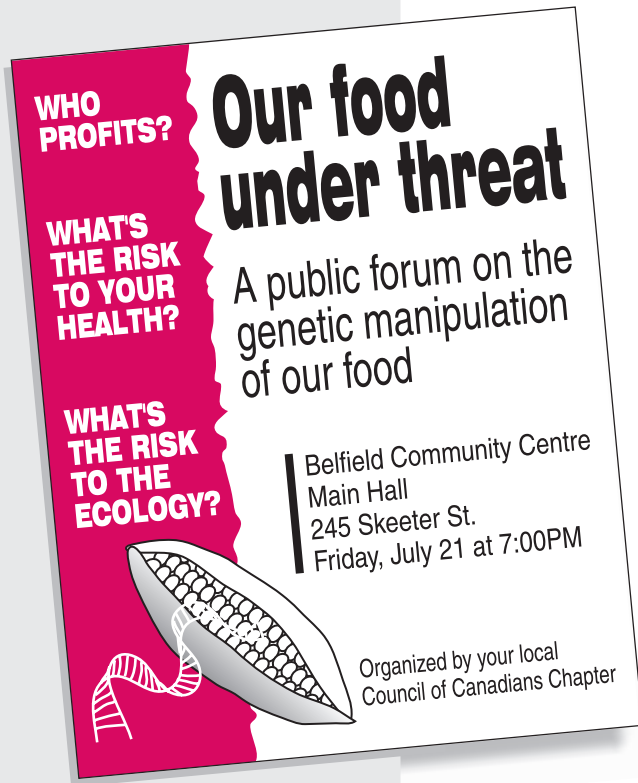


Posters

Posters are a good way to reach a large audience to advertise a public meeting or event. You can target posters at a specific community, such as a campus or a low-income

housing area, which increases their effectiveness. Many communities regularly tear down posters from public places, such as utility poles, so it's always worth finding out their tearing down schedule in order to maximize your exposure. Be sure to create a poster that will stand out. People are bombarded with information all day—what's special about your poster that will cause them to give it a second look?





Here are a few tips for creating an effective poster.

- ➔ Keep your poster short, simple, loud and eye-catching.
- ➔ Make your main message BIG—people should be able to see it from 20 feet away.
- ➔ Make the rest of your text short—people should be able to read it in less than one minute.
- ➔ Keep it visually consistent—more than one font or more than two colours is distracting.
- ➔ Don't make it too crowded by filling every space on the page. Leaving blank space calls attention to the text.
- ➔ Pictures and graphics can really add to a poster if they are clear and powerful.
- ➔ Don't forget to clearly mark the time, date and place of the event.

Advertising

The use of advertising allows a large degree of control over your message. Unpaid advertising such as notices in community papers, on community radio and television, or in entertainment weeklies are often used to promote public events. Paid ads can be used to publicly target the opposition's weaknesses or to express your main point on an issue.

Any advertising should be timed so that it will have the biggest impact on the opposition or an upcoming government decision. The down side of paid advertising is that it can be very expensive, and you really need to find someone with advertising skills who can do a great job. Advertising costs can be offset by doing the ad together with other groups.

Exposés and briefs

Drafting and presenting exposés and briefs takes a lot of time and effort, but it's a good tactic for publicly attacking your opponent's credibility. The idea is to expose the weaknesses of their arguments and the underlying problems with their activities, while at the same time outlining your chapter's strongest arguments. Usually, a brief is presented

to a government body, such as a committee. An exposé is normally presented at a press conference, which has been organized especially for the purpose. The Council's national office sometimes writes these kinds of in-depth reports. Check out the section on resources (page 59) to see if there are any that might help you in your work on a particular issue.



