



## Getting your message to the media about energy

Getting local media coverage for your *National Day of Action in Support of a Canadian Energy Strategy* event is a great way to bring more attention to Canada's energy issues. Below, you will find tips and media samples that you can use to help promote your action. Staff in the Council of Canadians' national office will also be working on a national media strategy.

### Definitions and deadlines

- **A public service announcement (PSA)** is distributed to media outlets for use in promoting your event to the public.
  - Identify the media that runs PSAs and check their deadlines – magazines or bi-weeklies may have deadlines as many as two or three weeks before the event. For radio or TV, it may only be 2-3 days before the event.
- **A media advisory** is intended to get media out to your event (press conference, rally, public forum, etc).
  - Send the media advisory the week prior to the event. If it is on the weekend, send the advisory on Wednesday. If it's a weeknight event, send the advisory two to three 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).
  - Send press releases the day of the event. Your aim is to gain attention, and to give the media an idea of what is newsworthy about your 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. They 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 exclusively. They are only one of your outreach and publicity tools. PSAs should be written in a way that you would imagine them read live on-air — they are a script rather than a press release. Make sure to include the "who, what, where, when and how as well as contact information that you're willing to have broadcast.

#### [SAMPLE] PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

run until [fill in day of event here]

#### **Citizens' group calls for national energy strategy**

The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians will be hosting a public forum/rally/event on [date] to help inform people about Canada's energy issues and the need for a national energy strategy. The event starts at [time], at the [venue]. Admission is free.

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

## Tips for media advisories

If you choose to open your event to the media, you could send a media advisory. 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 journalists' attention. Make sure your contact is available when reporters call or, if you do miss a call, return any messages from journalists as promptly as possible.

[SAMPLE] MEDIA ADVISORY - [Date]

### Citizens' group to host public event supporting energy strategy

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

**WHAT:** A public forum/mitten party/information booth that engages local residents on local and national energy issues.

**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

Keep in mind when you write your release what makes a story newsworthy: dramatic human interest, controversy, local angles, calendar tie-ins and major events, to name a few. In terms of timing, think about what your goal is. If the goal is to get people out to your event, you should send your press release at least one week in advance. This will give reporters time to do an advance story. If it is to raise awareness about the issue, a couple of days in advance should be sufficient.

Follow-up calls to reporters, or "pitching" can help you get 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. Take some time before you call to formulate your thoughts.

These tips will 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.
- **Be timely.** Do not call reporters when you know they are on deadline. Mid-morning and early afternoon are good times to make pitches. 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.

- **Hooks galore.** What makes a story newsworthy? Again, it's dramatic human interest, controversy, local angles, calendar tie-ins and major events. Be sure to let the reporter know if there is a photo opportunity at the event – they may be interested in coming out for this.

Here is a sample press release you may want to use, or you may want to write your own to reflect local issues:

[SAMPLE] PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[DATE]

**The Council of Canadians takes charge with Canada's first day of action on energy**

On February 2, 2008, the [ ] chapter of the Council of Canadians will be joining over 30 communities across the country to mark Canada's first national energy day of action. The group will be [hosting a forum/sending mittens/handing out information] to highlight the need for a Canadian energy strategy.

"Canada does not have a national energy strategy that addresses where our energy comes from, where it is going, or the high price of environmental devastation that can come with producing it," says [name] of the [ ] chapter of the Council of Canadians. "Our governments have signed away our sovereignty over energy resources through free trade agreements with the United States."

With huge transnational corporations now stripping Canada of its energy resources while draining and contaminating water resources, poisoning land and air, and accelerating climate change, the organization hopes the national day of action will send a strong message to the federal government.

Across the country, Canadians are concerned that the lack of an adequate legislative framework has led to privatized hydro projects and coal-bed methane explorations in British Columbia; the environmentally dangerous tar sands and massive transmission line projects in Alberta; destructive uranium mining projects in Saskatchewan and Ontario; expanding liquefied natural gas projects in the Maritimes; and a strong push for more nuclear power plants right across the country.

"Without a Canadian Energy Strategy – a strategy that will give Canadians security of their energy supplies, guaranteed access to energy reserves in times of need, and strong policies that protect our environment and focus on finding alternative, less harmful energy solutions – our country will continue to be a victim of an energy gold rush," says [ ].

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