



Take Charge! A National Day of Action in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy

Canadians experience long, cold winter months. As the snow starts to fly, our thoughts turn to staying warm. To do that, we need energy to heat our homes. But right now, 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.

That is why on February 2, 2008, Council of Canadians' chapters and members will be participating in events across the country as part of *Take Charge! A National Day of Action in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy*.

It will be a great way for activists across the country to raise awareness about energy issues, hold events, and strengthen the profile of the Council's energy campaign in the media. Together we can tell the federal government that Canada needs better controls over our energy resources, and a national strategy that guarantees energy supplies, protects the environment, provides a fair share of energy revenues, protects our citizens and natural resources, and ensures the needs of Canadians are put ahead of profits.

How your chapter can get involved:

You have probably already started thinking about ways you can raise awareness of energy issues. Many chapters have told us they plan to hold an event in their community. If you haven't already started thinking about your event, here some ideas to get you started:

Have a mitten party!

As a joint action, we will be asking Canadians across the country to send one mitten to Prime Minister Stephen Harper or their local MP in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy. (See *Send a Mitten to Stephen Harper* action sheet included in this kit.) Get together with other chapter members, friends and families and mail mittens to make a political point. Thousands of mittens will send a strong message!

Hand out handbills and fact sheets

We have some great materials available for distribution. Pick a popular, well-frequented location and get out and talk to people about energy concerns. Informal conversations are a great way to share information, and printed materials give people something to take away with them. You can download materials from www.canadians.org under our Energy Day of Action section on our website, or order copies from your regional office, or from Jeannette Muhongayire, Regional Organizing Team Assistant, at 1-800-387-7177, or by e-mail at jmuhongayire@canadians.org.

Panel discussions

In panel discussions, speakers make short presentations, followed by discussion or questions from audience members. Having a petition or a letter to sign is also a good way to involve the audience. Make sure you choose a topic that matters to your community, and have panelists that represent different views on the issue. Some panel topics could include: local energy concerns, energy and the environment, and why Canada needs a national energy strategy.

Meet with your MP

A national day of action is an excellent opportunity to visit your Member of Parliament. Organize a group of citizens to meet with your member, bring materials and fact sheets and discuss why Canada needs a national energy strategy.

Setting goals and planning your event

Public events are often thought up during inspired brainstorming sessions. It is important to set concrete goals for attendance and intended impact. This will give direction to your planning, as well as criteria for evaluating the event's success after it's over. Make a list of everything that will need to be done and divide up responsibilities among members of the group. Core members should delegate tasks so that one small group doesn't end up with the bulk of the work.

Media strategy

Getting media coverage is a good way to get publicity. To get your event mentioned in the media, send out a media release or a media advisory. The Council of Canadians national office will be coordinating a national media strategy, but getting some local coverage is a great way to get the word out. (See Media Tips for more information.)

An effective media strategy may also include letters to the editor explaining your views, whether it is about a local energy concern, or a general explanation of why Canada needs a national energy strategy.

Keep us in the loop

Let us know what kind of event you are planning so we can share success stories with other chapters across the country. Don't forget to take pictures of your event and send them to us. Most important of all, have fun!

For further assistance

Contact your Regional Organizer if you need further assistance:

British Columbia-Yukon: 1-604-688-8846 (toll free) 1-888-566-3888

Prairies: 1-780-429-4500 (toll free) 1-877-729-4500

Ontario-Quebec: 1-416-979-5554 (toll free) 1-800-208-7156

Atlantic: 1-902-422-7811



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].



Talking Points for the National Day of Action in Support of a Canadian Energy Strategy – February 2, 2008

The National Day of Action in Support of a Canadian Energy Strategy is a great time to meet with your Member of Parliament and talk about Canada's energy issues. Below are a few points you might want to raise during your discussion. Don't forget to bring other materials with you, like fact sheets, to help your MP understand your concerns.

1. Canada has been without a national energy strategy for more than 20 years. Since the early 1980s, our political leaders have not even considered policies such as export limits, strategic reserves and restriction of foreign ownership.
2. Even though our country is rich with energy resources, Canadians do not have control over them. Governments have signed this control away through multilateral agreements such as NAFTA and the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP).
3. NAFTA prevents us from selling our energy resources at rates lower than we sell them in the U.S. Under NAFTA, we can't ever cut back on the proportion of energy we produce and sell to the United States, even in times when our country runs short.
4. A recently-launched NAFTA lawsuit by Exxon-Mobil and Murphy Oil, shows how big oil companies will use trade agreements to protect their interests. The companies are suing the government of Newfoundland and Labrador for requiring them to spend some of their soaring profits on local research and job development. As with all NAFTA disputes, the outcome will be determined by a secret panel of trade experts behind closed doors.
5. The United States, a net importer, has a national energy policy. Mexico also has a national energy policy. The two countries Canada is most closely tied to through NAFTA and the SPP have protected their energy interests. Canada should have a national energy strategy that protects the current and future energy needs of its citizens.
6. Our country also has no way to get oil and gas from west to east because we have no cross-country pipelines. Experts have warned that in the event of a natural disaster like a hurricane on the east coast, Atlantic Canada would be in an energy crisis because Canada has no west-to-east pipelines. Instead, multi-billion dollar pipeline projects are being built or proposed in Canada to send energy resources to the U.S.
7. A group of tax specialists from the Montreal-based firm Agora recently looked at the level of taxation of oil and gas companies in Canada to determine whether these companies pay a "fair share" of taxes in the country relative to their profits. The conclusion was the oil and gas industry in Canada has lower taxation levels than all other major industries in Canada. The report exposes how the industry is raking in record profits, while still receiving tax breaks and subsidies from the federal government.
8. Canada's oil and gas industry – in the tar sands in particular – will prevent Canada from meeting its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. In December 2007, the Harper government was singled out for obstructing negotiations at a large international conference in Bali aimed at reducing harmful carbon emissions. According to recent polls, Canadians identify the environment as one of the most pressing issues for the country.
9. The tar sands, which are located in both Alberta and Saskatchewan, have been identified as Canada's largest emitter of carbon dioxide and one of the main reasons our country cannot meet its commitments

under the Kyoto Protocol. Massive amounts of water are used in the oil sands production, which becomes so badly polluted that it cannot be released back into the environment. The tar sands have destroyed boreal forests and released pollutants into nearby lands and water. Concerns have been raised that these pollutants have caused an unusually high cancer rate among the Fort Chipewyan First Nations, who live downstream. Even with the significant environmental and health concerns that have been raised, tar sands development continues at a blistering pace.

10. 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. Politicians cannot let corporations and the market set the agenda, focusing on big business needs, and privatizing public services, while ignoring the energy security needs of Canadians.

Send a mitten to Stephen Harper All Canadians need to stay warm!



Canada is a cold country and we need energy to stay warm and to heat our homes.

But Canada's lack of an energy policy is like sending someone out into the cold with only one mitten – one hand stays warm while the other freezes.

Without west-to-east pipelines, we do not have a way to get energy to all parts of the country. All Canadians deal with the impacts of an energy market focused on sending the majority of our oil and gas south to the energy-hungry United States, no matter what the environmental or societal cost to Canadians. Canada's "free market" approach to energy policy and its increasing integration with the United States under the Security and Prosperity Partnership have put multi-billion-dollar oil and gas companies in control of our energy future.

Take action!

Send one mitten to Prime Minister Stephen Harper or your local Member of Parliament and tell them that you support a Canadian Energy Strategy that will give Canadians secure 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.

Thousands of mittens from Canadians across the country will send a strong message that politicians cannot let corporations and the market set the agenda, focusing on big business needs, and privatizing public services, while ignoring the energy security needs of Canadians.

Send a mitten with your own message in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy. Take a picture with your mitten and e-mail it to us at mitten@canadians.org so we can show how people across the country are taking a stand and demanding government action.

Send your mitten in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy now!

Mail it to: Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa K1A 0A2

