



Getting Your Message to the Media

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 Canadian 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 Canadian 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 you are 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 for a Canadian Energy Strategy	
WHO:	The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians
WHAT:	A public forum/games night/information booth that engages local residents on [enter your event focus here, for example: the Canadian impacts of the tar sands, or what NAFTA means for Canada's energy]. This event is part of a National Day of Action in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy.
WHEN:	[date and time of event]
WHERE:	[venue]
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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]

Communities across the country 'Take Charge' in a National Day of Action in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy

On February 4, 2009, the [] chapter of the Council of Canadians will be joining more than [] communities across the country for a National Day of Action in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy.

"Faced with climate change and diminishing energy resources globally, now more than ever we need a Canadian Energy Strategy that puts people and the environment first." says [name] of the [] chapter of the Council of Canadians. "Instead, our government is gambling with our future allowing free trade agreements, free market rules and big oil to set the energy agenda, and the stakes are high."

The Council of Canadians has launched a campaign collecting signatures of municipal, provincial and federal representatives and politicians for a declaration in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy. Over the course of a month, more than [] declarations have been signed, indicating strong support for energy policy that is in line with the principles of energy security and ecological sustainability.

Canada, unlike many other countries, simply doesn't have any 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. Our country does not have strategic reserves or an energy sharing strategy. Meanwhile, the North American Free Trade Agreement contains energy provisions that undermine Canadian energy security. The proportional sharing clause obliges Canada to continue supporting the same proportion of non-renewable hydrocarbon exports to the U.S., even in times of Canadian need. Currently two-thirds of Canada's oil is exported to the U.S. while Quebec and Atlantic Canada rely on imports to meet 90 per cent of their oil needs. The lack of a clear strategy grounded in the public and environmental interest is fostering an energy gold rush, particularly in Alberta's tar sands which are widely regarded as a central reason why Canada cannot meet its Kyoto commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).

The tides are turning. The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States has opened the possibility of renegotiating the NAFTA and domestic and international pressure is coming to bear on the continued reliance on fossil fuels, particularly non-conventional sources such as the tar sands that produce three times as much greenhouse gases as conventional sources.

"We are at a pivotal moment for energy policy in Canada," says []. "Canadians across the country are telling the federal government that we need a Canadian Energy Strategy," says [] "A strategy that gives Canadians security of their energy supplies, guaranteed access to reserves in times of need, strong policies that protect our environment and transitions to more sustainable energy production and consumption."

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