

Blue Communities Media Guide

Getting your message out on World Water Day



Obtaining local media coverage for your event on World Water Day is a great way to bring more attention to Canada's water issues. Below, you will find tips and media samples that you can use to help promote your World Water Day 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 entirely. 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

Citizens' group Paints [name of your city] Blue for World Water Day

Are you concerned about water privatization, promoting public water and getting municipalities to ban bottled water, and having water declared a human right?

The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians will be meeting with city councilors to talk about local water issues and the need to recognize water as a human right.

Find out how you can get involved in the Blue Communities Project and work towards making your hometown a "blue community."

For more information contact: [name] at [phone number] / bluecommunities@canadians.org or visit www.canadians.org/water.

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 one 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]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Citizens' group to Paint [name of your city] Blue for World Water Day event

The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians is holding a rally/public forum/film screening as part of the World Water Day launch of the Blue Communities Project, to encourage communities to recognize water as a human right, promote public water, and ban bottled water sales at municipal facilities and events.

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

WHAT: A public forum/rally/march/meeting with city councilor(s) that engages local residents on water issues.

WHEN: [date and time of event]

WHERE: [venue]

- 30 -

For more information, 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, striking visual images, 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. 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.
- **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 to use, or you may want to write your own to reflect local issues:

[SAMPLE] PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

The Council of Canadians Paints [name of your city] Blue on World Water Day

[your community] - The [your city] chapter of The Council of Canadians is inviting residents to soak up some information on local water issues at a rally/public forum/film night on [date] for the launch of the Blue Communities Project.

“This World Water Day, we are calling on [municipal council/mayor] to declare water a human right and to ensure access to safe, clean, publicly-provided water,” said Jane Activist, a long-time resident of [your community]. “There is a growing movement across Canada and around the world to protect our water services from the growing threats of privatization and underfunding. We need Blue Communities to defeat that threat.”

The Blue Communities Project aims to put the public interest and the environment above corporate interests and calls on communities to adopt a water commons framework by: 1) Recognizing water as a human right; 2) promoting publicly-financed, owned and operated water and wastewater services; and 3) banning the sale of bottled water in public facilities and at municipal events. Municipalities that adopt this framework will be recognized as Blue Communities.

The public is invited to participate. Admission is free.

- 30 -

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