

# Advocacy Toolkit



**2008**

For non-profit and private organizations providing community-based employment and career training in British Columbia.

**This advocacy toolkit was prepared by Ethos Strategy Group for organizations involved in The BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance. Cover artwork and website design by Design HQ.**

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## **About The Advocacy Toolkit**

This toolkit outlines a variety of communications strategies aimed at promoting the BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance's objectives with respect to the Labour Market Development Agreement. Communications goals, messages, key audiences and strategies are provided. In addition, the toolkit offers tutorial information on media relations strategies.

The strategies detailed here reflect numerous working sessions with Alliance members from September 2007 to February 2008. They are designed to be used by local agencies and businesses to support and complement the Alliance's provincial communications strategies. In addition to promoting Alliance messages, you will likely find this toolkit useful in increasing the profile of your own organization and work.

## **Communications Plan: Key Elements**

### ***Rationale***

The following observations provide the rationale for a sector-wide advocacy campaign.

- 1) The sector needs to increase its profile to help people understand the value of community-based services.
- 2) Increased awareness will help your audiences understand why they should care about the Labour Market Development Agreement.
- 3) Those who are aware will take action if valued community services are threatened.

### ***Goals***

- 1) Persuade provincial decision-makers that employment and training services under the new LMDA should be delivered through community-based agencies and organizations.
- 2) Engage businesses, industry, local governments and the public as champions on behalf of community-based agencies and organizations.
- 3) Promote sector involvement in government decision-making affecting service delivery by positioning community-based agencies and organizations as the source of reliable expertise on labour market issues.

## **Top Messages**

- Community-based employment, training and support services are a valuable local asset offering in-depth knowledge of workforce development and training needs.
- Community-based agencies and organizations provide a wide range of services, giving BC's diverse populations the opportunity to choose the type of service that best meets their needs.
- In BC's changing labour market, employers and businesses benefit from the experience and expertise of community-based agencies and organizations.
- Community-based agencies and organizations enable both employers and employees to succeed in existing and emerging labour markets.

## **Website**

The Alliance has launched an information website ([www.bclmda.ca](http://www.bclmda.ca)). Information about how to use and promote the website is provided under 'Website and E-strategies' on page 14.

## **Key Audiences**

### Provincial Decision-Makers

*The Premier, Minister of Finance, Minister of Economic Development, Minister of Employment and Income Assistance, Minister of Child and Family Services, other Cabinet members, other government MLAs.*

### Federal Decision-Makers

*Minster of HRSDC, Chair of BC Caucus*

### Provincial Opposition

*Critics, other opposition MLAs*

### Potential Allies

*UBCM Executive, municipal social planners, mayors, Boards of Trade/Chambers of Commerce, colleges delivering training programs, private trade schools, Community Futures Development Corporations, Community Economic Development Network, specific businesses (e.g.: current and past clients), ICBC, Worksafe BC, unions, sector councils, Regional Skills Council Members*

### Current allies

*Board members, employees, clients, advocacy groups associated with specific populations, key volunteers and champions*

### Persuadable publics (engaged citizens)

## **Communications Strategies**

Raising awareness about the LMDA is the first step with our audiences - particularly persuadable public(s). There are a number of ways to reach these audiences and strategies recommended here are based on what can be reasonably achieved within a limited budget.

### ***Collect Stories***

Stories about personal experiences can help to communicate complex situations and policy issues to a broader group. Journalists, decision-makers and opinion leaders find stories a more useful way to illustrate issues. Many organizations have established 'story banks' to collect personal success stories, often on a specific topic related to a policy change campaign.

Please consider collecting stories using the template on page 7. Once complete please e-mail to [cevans@ethosstrategygroup.com](mailto:cevans@ethosstrategygroup.com). Ethos will fact check and verify the story as well as obtain permissions where needed.

Stories will be used, with consent, on the Alliance website and in media materials.

<b>Story Template</b>		
Organization Submitting Story:		
Address:		
Contact:		
Phone:	Email:	Website:
Photo Description:		
<p><b>Details</b></p> <p>Please answer the following questions: (you may provide the information in point form)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Where is your organization located? Who do you serve?</li> <li>2) What unique challenges do your clients face?</li> <li>3) How has your organization met this challenge?</li> <li>4) Please describe an individual story about a client who has benefited from your services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was/are his/her unique challenges?</li> <li>What did your staff do to assist?</li> <li>What was the result?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>		
<p>Privacy Policy: Please note that this case study information will not be used without the prior written consent of the organization. Once your organization has approved the case study, you will be asked to consent to this case study information being used to promote your organization and the British Columbia Career &amp; Workforce Development Alliance.</p>		

## ***Print Materials***

### **Cut-and-Paste Text**

Text provided here can be ‘cut and pasted’ into newsletters, media releases, websites and blogs. Select what you need and feel free to add additional text (keeping to key messages) for specific uses.

#### Text (701 words)

In the 2007 Federal Budget, the government announced its intention to transfer responsibility for all Employment Insurance training and employment programs to the provinces and territories. Transfer negotiations between the federal government and BC began in the fall of 2007 and an agreement was announced, February 20, 2008. Implementation will take place over the course of a year starting April 1, 2008.

Under this agreement, called the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), approximately \$300 Million in federal EI funds will come to BC to be spent on employment training assistance for EI recipients. Some federal staff will transfer as well. What will be decided over the course of the implementation year is the way the Province will distribute the funds.

The BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance (the Alliance) sees the LDMA as an opportunity for BC to develop a fully integrated and comprehensive workforce development strategy able to meet the long-term and changing needs of the BC economy. It also sees a risk that without the efforts of interested BC businesses, industry, communities and individuals, the current quality and range of available services may be diminished.

The Alliance is an informal network of provincial associations representing more than 300 independent training and employment agencies and practitioners located throughout BC. These agencies, some of which are run by not-for-profit societies and some of which are private businesses, are currently responsible for delivering all federal employment and training programs for unemployed Canadians. Their role is to help people who are unemployed in their communities find and keep employment and to help local employers find and keep new employees. Many agencies have developed specialized programs reflecting the nature of the communities they serve.

These programs can include life skills training for youth, workplace experience training for recent immigrants, and re-entry strategies for women who have been out of the workforce for some time. Some agencies specialize in helping people through career transitions and in identifying new career opportunities. All are knowledgeable about their local economies and about the workforce development needs facing local employers.

The provincial government has existing employment and training programs, the focus of which is to move people off of provincial income assistance. In the past, local community-based agencies provided this training just as they do for federal EI recipients.

Starting in 2001, however, the province sought to reduce the number of contracts it administered and moved to a system that favoured a standardized model of employment training delivered by large corporate enterprises. Currently just three agencies deliver the BC Employment Program (for unemployed welfare recipients). The two largest agencies are for-profit corporations, with the largest now owned by a major US multinational. While some community-based agencies have been sub-contracted to deliver some specialized services, many small agencies in communities all across BC were forced to shut down. As a result, these communities lost the added value that knowledgeable local organizations bring to the important task of developing the local workforce.

With the transfer of federal employment and training program funds to the province, the question of how it will run the programs arises. Contracts with local community-based agencies and organizations that transferred to the province as part of the LMDA agreement will mostly expire over the next two years. The provincial government can choose to retain the range and diversity provided by community-based agencies or it can once more select a standardized delivery model that ignores the varied needs of BC communities and the expertise earned by local agencies in serving those communities over many years.

As a way of sharing information with businesses, industry, communities and individuals about the LMDA and the services offered by community-based training and employment agencies and organizations, the Alliance has created a website: [www.bclmda.ca](http://www.bclmda.ca). Website visitors can sign up to receive a newsletter as well as view a variety of background papers and research documents.

BC's economy is changing and growing and BC's labour market needs are changing and growing with it. Community-based agencies with knowledge and experience working with local employers and with local communities are in place and working to meet current and future challenges. These agencies are assets that cannot be replaced by on-line and single source services. Use your influence to support employment and training agencies in your community.

## **Media Release Backgrounder**

Please feel free to use the following backgrounder to accompany your media releases. Add additional local facts if needed.

### **BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance - Backgrounder**

#### ***Who is in The BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance?***

Alliance members are both non-profit and private organizations that provide community-based employment and career training aimed at assisting individuals in overcoming their barriers to employment.

The 300 or so agencies and organizations in the Alliance are all members of one or more of the following provincial (or national) umbrella organizations:

- Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA)
- The Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training (ASPECT)
- Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet)
- The Career Management Association of BC (BCCMA)
- Education and Networking for Rehabilitation and Career Practitioners (ENET)

#### ***What is the Labour Market Development Agreement?***

The Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) is the federal-provincial agreement that sets out responsibility for delivering employment and training programs. It has been re-negotiated for the purpose of transferring the Employment Insurance Part II Employment Benefits and Support Measures from the federal government to the provinces and territories.

#### ***When did the governments finish negotiations?***

An agreement between the Government of Canada and the BC Government was announced on February 20, 2008.

#### ***When will the LMDA take affect?***

BC will take over the task of administering contracts with federal service providers on April 1, 2008. At that point it will begin a year-long process during which it will decide how to administer the future delivery of employment and training services.

#### ***What government agencies are involved?***

In BC, the Ministry of Economic Development was responsible for re-negotiating the LMDA. The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance will be responsible for administering the contracts to provide employment and training services.

### ***What does the BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance want?***

The BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance is asking to be included in the decision-making process dealing with how BC will deliver employment and training services into the future. Our members have considerable expertise to contribute. Our goal is to ensure that:

- all British Columbians continue to benefit from the expertise and experience that local agencies bring to preparing workers, and
- businesses continue to benefit from our members' in-depth knowledge of local labour markets.

## **Questions and Answers**

Please use the following “Q’s and A’s” to prepare for media interviews. This information was developed in December 2007 to assist in launching the Alliance website. (Some information has been updated to reflect the agreement reached on February 20, 2008.)

### Introducing yourself

Please introduce yourself in relation to your own workplace rather than as a member of a particular association. It removes one layer and makes your connection to the issue more concrete and easier to grasp than if you try to fit in the association name as well.

So Jane Doe, for example, would say she is with the XYZ Agency, which is a member of the BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance. If you do want to use your association name, please double check with the journalist to ensure they have taken down the information correctly.

### Top Line Messages – General

- Community-based employment, training and support services are a valuable local asset offering in-depth knowledge of workforce development and training needs.
- Community-based agencies and organizations provide a wide range of services, giving BC’s diverse populations the opportunity to choose the type of service that best meets their needs.
- In BC’s changing labour market, employers and businesses benefit from the experience and expertise of community-based agencies and organizations.

- Community-based agencies and organizations enable both employers and employees to succeed in existing and emerging labour markets.

## The Alliance

### **Q.1 *What is the BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance?***

- A. The BC Career and Workforce Development Alliance is a coalition of more than 300 independent community-based agencies and organizations.

*If you are asked for more details, you can identify the associations representing the various agencies:*

- The Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training (ASPECT)
- Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA)
- Education and Networking for Rehabilitation and Career Practitioners (ENET)
- Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet)
- The Career Management Association of BC (BCCMA)

### **Q.2 *When/why was the Alliance created?***

- A. The Alliance was formed in the spring of 2007 in response to the pending transfer of responsibility for delivering training and employment programs for Employment Insurance recipients to the provincial government.

Alliance members are the agencies and organizations that currently deliver EI training and employment programs on behalf of the federal government. We have a great deal at stake in how the province chooses to manage these programs. We also have the expertise to advise the provincial government on the needs of local communities.

### **Q.3 *What is a community-based agency?***

- A. *Be prepared to provide two specific examples you can speak about comfortably.*

### **Q.4 *What is the Alliance trying to achieve?***

- A. In the short term, the Alliance is seeking an active role in planning how the province will implement the new Labour Market Development Agreement. Our members have valuable local knowledge and experience that is useful in any discussion of BC's future workforce development and training needs.

In the long term, we want to ensure that BC employers and employees continue to benefit from the wide range of workforce development and employment training services provided by our members.

**Q.5** *What do you want people to do?*

We think it is important that British Columbians understand the significance of this change and how it could affect their lives and communities. We'd like them to visit [www.bclmda.ca](http://www.bclmda.ca) to find out about the agreement and sign up to receive more information as we know more about how the agreement will be implemented.

The Website

**Q.6** *Why have you launched a new website?*

- A. The Alliance has launched the website to educate and inform British Columbians about the Labour Market Development Agreement and what it might mean for their communities. We invite people to visit the website and sign up for newsletter updates. **The Website is - [www.bclmda.ca](http://www.bclmda.ca)**

**Q.7** *What is on the website?*

- A. The website contains information, stories, and resources for people to use in spreading the word about the Labour Market Development Agreement and what it might mean for their communities.

We will update the website regularly as new information becomes available.

The Issue

**Q.8** *What does the Labour Market Development Agreement mean for BC communities?*

- A. The new Labour Market Development Agreement means that all Employment Insurance job training programs will come under provincial jurisdiction as of April 1, 2008. It may also mean a loss in the quality and range of services available to BC residents.

With this loss will go the knowledge and experience that community-based agencies have of the local population, local employers and local labour market. a bit vague

**Q.9** *Why is the Alliance concerned about provincial management of these programs?*

Alliance members are concerned that the BC government may change the way EI programs are currently delivered by the federal government and move to the system they have for provincial income assistance recipients.

Provincial income assistance recipients have very little choice about the kind of employment training they receive.

BC's Employment Assistance program is delivered by a small number of mostly very large enterprises. While this might be efficient from a government perspective, if applied to EI recipients, it means that BC communities will lose many of their existing community-based employment and training agencies and organizations and many of the harder to serve members of the population will not have the support they need to enter the workforce.

Our experience makes clear that people have very different needs as they prepare to enter or re-enter the workforce. A community-based agency that knows the local economy and has relationships with local employers is in the best position to serve its community.

**Q.10 *Who will be most affected by the LMDA?***

- A. The transfer of EI employment programs to the province will affect every community if the move leads to a loss in the quality and range of services available to BC residents.

Alliance member agencies are working in communities throughout BC. We have developed specialized services for engaging some hard to reach populations such as youth, new immigrants, aboriginal people, and others. People who have trouble finding or keeping employment for other reasons will not get the extra support currently provided by local community-based agencies and organizations.

The LMDA

**Q.11 *What is the Labour Market Development Agreement?***

- A. The Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) is the federal-provincial agreement that sets out responsibility for delivering employment and training programs. It has been re-negotiated for the purpose of transferring the Employment Insurance Part II Employment Benefits and Support Measures from the federal government to the provinces and territories.

**Q.12 *When will the LMDA take effect?***

- A. The agreement was reached on February 20, 2008 and will take effect on April 1, 2008. At that point a year-long implementation phase will begin.

**Q.13 *How much money will be transferred under the LMDA?***

- A. British Columbia will receive just over \$300 Million. The national figure is approximately \$2 Billion.

## ***Website and E-strategies***

There are numerous strategies community-based service providers can implement easily and at no cost, using existing networks with colleagues and community members.

- Using the icon provided on the ‘resources’ page of the website, put a link to The Career and Workforce Development Alliance website on your organization’s website.
- Encourage community partners, key volunteers, program alumni and champions to link to Alliance website from their websites and blogs.
- Use your e-mail signature strategically - promote awareness by including the website address in your e-mail signatures along with an information statement or question.

Example:

Jane Doe  
Executive Director, ABC Society

Do you know about the new Canada/BC labour agreement?  
Visit [www.bclmda.ca](http://www.bclmda.ca) to find out more.

Consider including a key fact in your e-mail signature as well. For example, the number of clients served, or the number of businesses you work with. Introduce a new fact or testimonial quote periodically.

## ***Earned Media***

On behalf of the Alliance, Ethos Strategy Group will be issuing media releases on LMDA information as events occur. We encourage community-service providers to contact and keep informed local media by advising on and distributing releases as needed.

### **Strategies**

- Contact reporters about the LMDA and the Alliance website. Use the opportunity to promote the value and profile of your own organization. Be ready with individual success stories that you have obtained permission to use. Journalists often want a personal face and story to illustrate the issue.
- Write and place an opinion editorial in your local paper.
- Organize supporters to write letters to the editor in response to news articles about the LMDA or other news related to community-based employment and career services.

# Media Relations Tutorials

## ***Introduction***

Media relations is an important part of your organization's overall communications and public relations plan. Often referred to as 'earned media', news or editorial coverage provides invaluable credibility to your organization or issue. While it is easy to think of this coverage as 'free' it is important to remember that it takes planning, skills and follow-through to get your message out successfully and repeated accurately. Effective media relations specialists spend many hours cultivating relationships with media outlets, writing materials and discovering the best strategies for their markets.

## ***Important Points to Remember***

- The media is not your audience.
- Earned media gives you credibility.
- Getting your message out requires planning.

## ***Understanding How the Media Works***

### **Deadlines**

- Deadlines matter! No matter how good your story is you must understand when the media needs it.

### **Trends**

- News is business - read public opinion polls to find out what interests news editors
- Can you link your issue to existing stories in the media?

### **Story Meetings**

- Happen in the morning – so you need to get your story ideas to them beforehand.
- Decisions are made by editors, assignment editors and news directors. If your contact is a reporter be sure to give him/her the information to pitch the story to the decision-makers.

### **Newsworthiness**

- *“Tell me something new about something I care about.”*  
Barbara Frum

## ***Getting started***

Here are a few questions to ask before you get started.

### **Is it newsworthy?**

- Is it a new story?
- Does it offer a new perspective on an ongoing story?
- Is my organization doing something different?
- Are there new developments about my issue?
- Is the timing right?

### **Will our audience be interested?**

- Will it be compelling to our audience?
- Will it be interesting to them?
- Do we have the right messenger or spokesperson?

### **Are we prepared?**

- Do we need to develop fact sheets or backgrounders? (most of the time – YES!)
- Is our spokesperson prepared and available for interviews?
- Is the timing right?

## ***How to Reach the Media***

### **Media Advisory**

A media advisory tells reporters and editors about a newsworthy event or activity that has *not* happened yet. The advisory should give enough information about the event or release to pique interest but not so much that a story could be written.

Media advisories are sent out several days in advance of media conferences, media events, the release of important information (studies, surveys, etc). It is advisable to also send out the advisory again early on the day of the event.



Here is an example of a media advisory that generated significant media coverage.

# Media Advisory - Example

Attention: Assignment editors – photo opportunity

October 18, 2006

## **What happens to the homeless during an extreme weather occurrence?**

Members of the media are cordially invited to attend an informational session during Homelessness Awareness Week. This is an excellent photo opportunity.

**When: Thursday, October 19th  
9:30 to 11:00 am**

**Where: First Baptist Church  
969 Burrard St  
Vancouver**

The Extreme Weather Response is an emergency response to prevent harm to homeless people resulting from extreme winter weather. It provides extra shelter spaces for homeless people during periods of extreme winter weather (as defined by each community).

The Greater Vancouver Cold/Wet Weather Strategy (CWWS) is a regional network of organizations working to meet local shelter needs during the winter, from October to April. The CWWS initiated the Extreme Weather Response in 2002, following two years of developing a suitable model for extreme weather response.

Funding for the Extreme Weather Response Spaces comes from:

- BC Housing
- National Homelessness Initiative in partnership with the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, and the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee
- Other, including municipalities, health authorities, and substantial gifts in kind through volunteerism

The Extreme Weather Response Shelter program is a crisis response, not intended as a substitute for year-round and Cold/Wet Weather shelters or for long-term affordable housing.

Through this response, it is anticipated approximately 400 additional shelter spaces from seven EWR plans will be in place covering 11 Greater Vancouver municipalities.

-30-

For more information please call XXX at XXX

## **Media or News Release**

A media release is a written document that provides details about the story you think is newsworthy. Media releases are formula writing that follow a specific format. Each paragraph is designed to deliver different information. (see example).

A few things you should consider about media releases.

### ***Timing***

- News releases must be sent early in the day (between 8:00 – 9:00 AM) to ensure your event or issue is on the assignment editor’s schedule. Remember – timing is important!

### ***Distribution***

- You can hire a media distribution service to ensure your release is faxing and e-mailed to the right organizations. Many services will allow you to customize the list to target the type of journalist you are trying to reach (e.g.: business, citynews, health, national etc.) Even if you use a distribution service you will still need to cultivate your own list to follow-up. Distribution services will not give you their lists.
- Many organizations develop their own customized media list. If not you can purchase lists although they are often expensive.
- Media release can be e-mailed and faxed. A tip about sending media releases electronically: always include the text in the body of the e-mail – never send it as an attachment. Most media outlets have a policy to not open attachments unless the document has been requested.
- Don’t assume that reporters will see your release. Always follow up with a phone call to ensure your release has been read. If you already have a relationship with a reporter, contact that person directly.

### **Writing Style**

- Use active sentence structure (noun before verb)
- Make sure your headline captures the story
- Make the lede compelling
- Imagine your release being read verbatim on the news (it happens!) and write in plain language avoiding jargon and complex sentence structures.

Here is a media release template – see page 20.

# Media Release

**Headline Here:** Think of this as a one sentence synopsis of your story.

For Immediate Release  
Date Here

**(City Location Here)** – The Lede: This first paragraph should describe the who, what, why and when of your story. This is the paragraph that hooks the reporter/editor. If you interest them here, they'll keep reading.

**Second Paragraph** – In this paragraph you can provide interesting facts or context for your story. In this case facts about homelessness in your area would be appropriate.

**Third Paragraph** – This paragraph often contains a quote from one of your spokespeople. The quote is a good way to communicate your key message. The quote should be very clear and not likely to be misinterpreted or taken out context. Example: “The increase in homelessness has become a crisis – it’s important that we all work together to end homelessness.” commented Ms. Brown, Chair of the local task force.

**Fourth and Fifth Paragraphs** – You can convey more detail or background information. In the case of an event make sure to give all the important information. You can also include website addresses to direct journalists to reports or more information.

-30- (the “-30- ” signifies the end of the text part of a media release or media advisory)

Closing – For additional information or interview please contact:

Always provide contact information including phone and cell numbers.  
(Note: your contact person must be available throughout the day for reporters to call.)

## **Backgrounders**

Backgrounders are documents that accompany media releases that give the journalist context about your organization or issue. Backgrounders can be written in a narrative style or point form.

For example, the Canadian Cancer Society provides backgrounders to each of their issue areas (breast cancer, smoking etc.) In this instance the Cancer Society uses point form.

Backgrounders should be provided about organizations, report findings, or the history of an area or problem.

## **Pitching or Media Calls**

Pitching (or a media call) is a call to ensure that editors and journalists have received your release and to interest them in your story. Think of a ‘pitch’ as a negotiation where you want them to say yes!

Your goal is to be an asset to the editor or journalist. This is where your initial research comes into play. What does this outlet care about? Are they focused on environmental or health stories? Can you tie your story into their interest? What other stories are they working on?

### **Tips**

- Be thick-skinned – particularly with assignment editors in urban centres – they get hundreds of releases every day!
- Think strategically about how to make them care about your story.
- Ask if you can provide additional information.

## **Media Kits and Media Rooms**

A media kit is an important tool in media relations. A media room is a place on your website where you post the same information contained in your media kit. As a rule, a media kit should include:

- Current media releases
- Backgrounder
- Biographies of speakers or spokespeople
- Other relevant materials i.e.: studies, reports, important (public) documents
- Photos (digital is preferred) of speakers or background interest

Other items to consider:

- Timelines
- Organizational profile
- Video B-roll

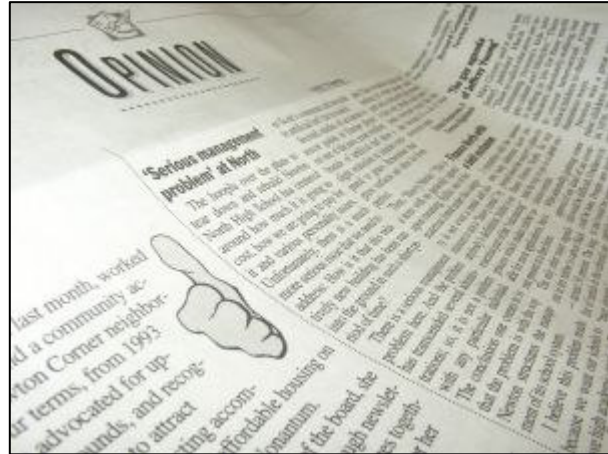
Providing this information to journalists makes their job easier and increases the chances that your message will get out.

## About Op Eds

The term “op ed” is short for ‘opposite the editorial’ or ‘opinion editorial’. It is an opinion or commentary article that is published opposite the editorial page in most newspapers. Anyone can submit an op ed to a newspaper.

### Tips

- Call in advance and speak to the editorial page editor ask to reserve space for an op ed. Editors like to publish op eds that comment on current, newsworthy issues.
- Generally, op eds are 600 to 800 words in length. Some can be as little as 200 or 300 words. Check with the editor when you call to ask for space. Make sure your article is within the word count required – you don’t want to give the editor a reason to edit your piece.
- Op eds are usually signed by someone who has credibility or name recognition in relation to the particular issue. They are frequently ghost written.
- Op eds, like press releases, often use a formula writing approach. As a rule, your op ed should cover the following points:
  - Identify the problem – you can do this through a story or facts. We find that a story is the best way to capture people’s interest.
  - Connect the problem to a larger trend (if appropriate)
  - Provide local detail – statistics and facts.
  - Describe solutions – tell people about what will solve the problem.
  - Consider including a call to action – ask readers to support something that will help solve the problem.
  - End on a personal note. Consider going back to the first paragraph and wrapping up your story.
- Other writing tips: avoid jargon and use active sentence structure.



## Interview Strategies

### Tips



- Be prepared. Most interviews are not long so decide on your top 3 to 5 messages and make sure to use them.
- Think of the questions you are most afraid to be asked and rehearse your response.
- Practice 'bridging' techniques in advance—answer the reporter's question by 'bridging' back to your message. Example: "That's an interesting question but I think we really need to look at the issue from an XYZ perspective."
- Before you begin, ask the reporter if they have previously covered your issue. The answer may give you a sense of what type of questions you'll be asked.
- Remember, the media is not your audience. Specific members of the public are your audience. Think about what you want those people to understand about the issue.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms – both jargon and acronyms mean almost nothing to the general public and can be off-putting.
- If you are asked a negative sounding question by a reporter, avoid repeating the question in your answer. Begin your answer with a complete sentence that conveys *your* message about the issue.
- Reporters from various media outlets have different needs. Radio interviews for news are often short so get to your important points quickly. TV reporters like to have interesting visual backgrounds so think about where you would like to be interviewed. Again, TV interviews are often quick – get to the point.
- Talk in short sentences and don't rush. Pausing between statements helps the interviewer edit the story later and reduces the chance of your statements being taken out of context.
- Be compelling and concise.
- Focus on solutions rather than just identifying the problem.
- Never guess or make up an answer. If you don't know the answer, say so, or refer the reporter to someone who does.

- Sometimes it is possible to retake an answer if you are unhappy with your comment. If you are not ‘live’ on the air you can ask the reporter if you can answer the question again.
- At the end of the interview, thank the reporter and ask if you can provide more information. Offer your business card and ask for theirs.

## **Letters to the Editor**

Organizing your supporters to write letters to the editor can be an effective way to get your message out. It also demonstrates that the public (your letter writers) care about your issue or topic. This demonstration of interest may lead the newspaper to cover your issue in greater detail.

### **Tips**

- Let supporters know about key dates in advance so they can be prepared to respond to news or editorial stories.
- Remember that editors select letters that respond to something that was in their paper. Generally, editors do not publish letters that pertain to personal disagreements or to items that did not appear in the paper.
- Remind letter writers to keep their letters to the maximum word count allowed. Editors will not publish longer letters or will edit them to fit. Each paper has a different policy so do your research.

## **Editorial Meetings**

An editorial board meeting is a meeting you request to present information about your organization or issue to senior editorial staff at a newspaper or other media outlet. In the television and radio world you would ask to meet with news directors.

This meeting is an opportunity for you to educate senior staff about the importance of your organization, issue or message in a direct fashion. You may want to convene a meeting of this type if you feel your organization or issue has been misrepresented or ignored.

In most instances the news outlet will ask you to provide an agenda and list of participants (3 to 5). Often, it takes weeks before this meeting occurs so think ahead with respect to your overall media relations strategy.

Be prepared with materials to leave and chose speakers prepared to address a specific area.

## Media Events

Media events are staged events designed to get media attention – often TV media. Media events can be protests, rallies, or events with costumes.

Media events can be helpful to draw attention to ‘soft stories’; stories that are not breaking news. For example, a hospital might hold a media event when opening a new facility or program. An environmental group may generate coverage by dressing up as wildlife to promote a new initiative.

Media events are almost always designed to include visuals as visuals are what TV cameras and print photographers are looking for. Make sure you target the right media for the right event. In entertainment promotion, ‘about town’ columnists will usually show up at events and want photos of the glamorous and famous participants. Media events are one way to capitalize on celebrity champions.

Depending on your issue, the media often want personal stories when they attend events.

### Tips

- Identify who will speak on behalf of your committee or organization in advance and direct reporters to those people.
- Designate someone to meet and greet reporters and to give guidance about who is available for interviews.

## Public Service Announcements

PSAs as they are also known, are free scripted advertising you create and then offer to radio, television stations and newspapers. You often hear PSAs about health related issues. TV and radio PSAs can also be posted to websites and places like YouTube.

In some instances you can provide text to the outlet and they will use their own people to make your announcement. In other cases you may want to record the PSA yourself and give it to TV and radio stations. The one downside to this free advertising is that you do not have control about when or how often the PSAs are broadcast.

Examples:

To listen to the **radio** PSAs created for Homelessness Action Week 2007 in BC, go to [www.stophomelessness.com](http://www.stophomelessness.com)

To see the **television** PSAs that were created for the Make Poverty History Campaign, visit: [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org) and watch the ‘Click’ PSAs.

Here is an example of a **print** PSA that appeared on the CBC website:

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Baroque Masterworks from the National Gallery of Canada

December 15, 2006 to February 25, 2007

This exhibition provides a unique opportunity for Canadians to see 12 precious Baroque masterwork paintings from the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Canada by the likes of Peter Paul Rubens, Rembrandt van Rijn, and Nicholas Poussin. Baroque Masterworks from the National Gallery of Canada features Italian, French, Spanish, Dutch and Flemish paintings dating from 1600 to 1750 arising from different social, political and religious climates.

### ***Media Monitoring***

Monitoring your media coverage is an important follow-up to a campaign and an on-going activity for any organization. There are a number of media monitoring organizations that can track the coverage of your issue and organization.

Here are a few popular organizations:

#### ***Infomart***

“FPinfomart.ca is Canada's largest provider of media monitoring and corporate information, including more than 275 news sources from coast to coast, plus the authoritative company data for which the Financial Post DataGroup is renowned.”

<http://www.fpinformart.ca/>

#### ***Bowdens***

“Whether you wish to track your media coverage, analyze your competition, or follow trends that affect your industry, Bowdens simply is the fastest and most comprehensive monitoring choice around. While you can opt to have your coverage delivered by mail, you can now also conveniently receive all of your media exposure each day right onto your desktop via the Media Monitoring Module.”

<http://www.bowdens.com/monitor/monitorcoverage.htm>

#### ***CNW Group - MediaVantage***

“MediaVantage Media Monitoring automatically and continuously scans thousands of news sources, performs media-wide keyword searches and delivers concise, relevant results to a single interface in a uniform format. The information is easily integrated and is easy to organize.” <http://www.newswire.ca/en/content/basic/93.cgi#monitor1>

### **CCNMatthews**

CCNMatthews' monitoring services help you learn what's being said about your organization, industry or competitors.

- \* Follow industry trends
- \* Gauge investor sentiment
- \* Track the competition
- \* Receive news releases as they break

<http://www.ccnmatthews.com/news/releases/monitoring.jsp>

### **Google News**

“Google News gathers stories from more than 4,500 English-language news sources worldwide, and automatically arranges them to present the most relevant news first. Topics are updated every 15 minutes, so you're likely to see new stories each time you check the page. Pick the item that interests you and you'll go directly to the site which published that story.” <http://news.google.ca/news?ned=ca>

### **BC's Print Media Market**

Here are recent (2006) statistics on print readership in BC. Ratings are generated from 'most read' in the previous three days.

Readership data for all newspapers in BC is available at [www.nadbank.com](http://www.nadbank.com).

