



LABOUR
TORONTO & YORK REGION
COUNCIL

Demonstration Planning Guide





INTRODUCTION

Around the world, public demonstrations are an important form of political expression. Demonstrations are used to show opposition to unfair treatment, publicize issues and demands, build movements and apply pressure on corporations, governments and other targets.

This guide is designed to help organizers plan demonstrations that are inclusive, effective and safe. Most demonstrations are not stand-alone events, they are tactics used during on-going campaigns. When a campaign plan is in place, there is a clear frame of reference for the many decisions that must be made when planning a demonstration.

- You can download **Labour Council Campaign Planning Handbook** from the resources page of labourcouncil.ca

PLANNING

WHO

- Create a planning committee that is diverse and includes representatives of key allies
- Plan an initial brainstorming session

WHY

- When the planning committee meets, set clear goals for the demonstration.
- Set internal organization goals: How can the demonstration consolidate/build the campaign? How can new allies be won to support the campaign? How can our allies' constraints be respected?
- Set external goals: What are the demands of the demonstration? What are we trying to achieve? How can the demonstration apply effective pressure on the decision maker(s) we are targeting? How can it discredit our opponents, enhance our

credibility and increase support for our demands? How can the demonstration build campaign momentum?

WHAT

- Decide upon the parameters of the event:
 - goal, political orientation, scale
 - participants in the action and the target audience
 - name, public profile & visibility
- Propose timing for the event that offers maximum political gain and minimal disruption of other events
- Be clear about the range of tactics that will best serve the goals of the demonstration you are planning. Will the tactics being considered be within the comfort range of supporters and allies? Will they strengthen the campaign and pressure the campaign's targets?

- What size of demonstration is appropriate? What is achievable?
- Create a broad narrative for the event
 - what are the values that should be projected in the public messaging for the event
- Analysis of how the event can feed into existing work, and a plan for gaining the most from post-action momentum

HOW

- Assessment of capacity and contributions from participating groups/organizations
- Sub-committees for the planning and execution of action

PREPARATION

The following main sub-committees will meet on an as-needed basis and report back to the main planning committee on tasks and next steps:



RESOURCES

- Create a list of groups, organizations or individuals who can provide funds and other resources (e.g. staff, equipment, performers)
- Develop a customizable funding proposal or “pitch”

COMMUNICATIONS

- Create a communications strategy that reflects the developing narrative of the event
- Create and continually publicize a website or social media page as an “update center” for those interested in keeping up with the latest
- Plan strategic advertising through organizational newsletters, websites, social media, community media and mainstream media

- Produce a list of supportive/interested media partners (e.g. community radio, progressive news media, alternative media) to approach about free announcements or ads
- Plan credible media advisories (e.g. lead up or launch, the day before and after the event) and post them on the website
- Create a preliminary narrative to circulate after the event. Try to line up op-eds or report-back stories
- Follow-up and maintain contact with key media people



OUTREACH

- Determine **where** and with **whom** conversations need to happen for maximum engagement
- In addition to email communication, develop a plan for face-to-face mobilization through announcements at:
 - Community events
 - Union meetings
 - Workplace conversations
 - Event-appropriate gatherings (e.g. at a bus stop if it's transit related)
- Maintain contact and communication feed with key liaisons from various groups/spaces
- Get an estimated number of participants/attendees from each liaison
- Work with liaisons to organize buses or meeting points for the day of the action

CONTENT

- Develop format of the event based on past successes and feedback from representatives of target audience
- Confirm MCs, speakers, performers, DJs, and any other components that correspond to the format of the event
- Confirm core marshals or point-people who will:
 - Recruit marshals/volunteers for particular actions (e.g. marches, petition signing)
 - Organize training or briefing sessions to streamline exact requirements of volunteers
- Assign members of the sub-committee to book space, sound, necessary equipment, arrange parking, liaise with police
- Create a set of accessibility guidelines and adhere to them

ACTION

Checklist for the days leading to an event:

- Gauge political conditions and assess if any adjustment to content or event narrative is necessary
- In a final planning session, have each sub-committee report an internal checklist and associated point-people to the organizing committee
- Depending on the scale of the event, assign additional point-people whose main task will be to know who is doing what, and will be reachable by cell phone before, during, and after the event
- Organize debriefing sessions immediately following the event



FOLLOW-UP

- In the debriefing session, get feedback on the success of the event and confirm/adjust the post-event narrative
- Circulate the post-event narrative (e.g. media release, op-eds)
- Discuss ways to follow-through on plans to maintain event's momentum as part of a spectrum of engagement
- Document strengths and weaknesses of the event

DOING IT RIGHT – EACH TIME

Following the steps in this guide will help you create a successful event. How much impact it has depends not just on what happens at the demonstration, but how it is followed up. Think about an ongoing cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation that gets you ready for the next action. And make sure you document it with pictures, interviews, and short videos – you never know when you are making history.



Demonstration Planning Guide

One of the most basic forms of political expression is when people take to the streets to highlight concerns, raise demands, or show their anger against unfair treatment. Rallies and demonstrations are an integral part of the political process all across the world. To be successful, they need to be well planned to ensure that participants feel energized and the right message gets sent to both the public and those in power.

This guide is designed to help anyone plan events that are inclusive, safe, and effective.



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