



Communities, Not Cuts.

A Local Action Organizing Guide

August 2019



Introduction

In order to change the conversation about the Ford Conservatives' cuts and the importance of defending public services in our communities, we need to create and strengthen networks of CUPE members to engage the public and build the resistance.

To that end, the following *Local Action Organizing Guide* consists of tips and tricks to stimulate activism in your Local and in your community. This guide might have way more information than you need—no need to get overwhelmed. What follows is inspiration, not obligation.

Community Engagement Actions

Among the best ways to raise awareness about Conservative Cuts is through community engagement actions.

Such actions may include:

- Leafletting on the street (mainstreeting);
- Tabling at a farmer's market, local festival or other community event;
- Pop-up rallies, visiting MPP events, and town hall meetings;
- Door-to-door canvasses;
- Ads, social media posts, and opinion-editorials in local news and social media outlets;
- Picnics, and other social events.

With the federal election coming up in October, now is a great time to speak to your neighbours about the importance of public services and the damage being done by the provincial Conservatives. People will be expecting political candidates to stop them and are often more approachable during election season. It's all about listening to people's priorities and interests.

Quick tips for success.

- **Have a to-do-list.** Having a to-do-list, and checking it every time your planning group meets, is the best way to stay organized. Have your main planner responsible for keeping track of it and making sure everyone has a copy as it is updated. Your to-do list should have a list of the things that need to get done for your event, it should note the person responsible, the due date, and status.

- **Go with a group.** Whether you are tabling at an event or knocking on doors, always work with a friend, a group of friends, or other members. It makes the experience more fun, safe, and interesting. You can take turns doing the talking and help each other work on your messaging to see what's working and what isn't.
- **Be an active listener.** Community engagement is all about listening to people, trying to understand their priorities, and then making a connection.
- **Have fun!** Mainstreeting and canvassing are exciting and friendly ways to meet neighbours and people with similar interest.

Resources

www.communitiesnotcuts.ca is your one-stop shop for leaflets, pamphlets, guides, and other tools to help you get out the message. If you need any special support send us a message at info@cupe.on.ca

Outreach

Once you've got the basics figured out, it's time to get people to your action. It's best to do this with as much advanced notice as possible, to allow word to spread and for people to plan ahead.

Your first stop in getting the word out about your event should be allied groups that are already familiar with the issues. This includes:

- Other CUPE Locals/ CUPE District Councils
- Labour Councils
- Union locals (especially other public sector unions)
- Coalition partners (Health Coalition, 15 and Fairness, etc)
- Friends and family

The goal should be to get them to attend, send a speaker, and in some cases to endorse or even co-organize.

Facebook

Create a Facebook event, preferably sponsored by your local. Once you've invited all your local contacts via Facebook, think of 3-5 well-connected people who can invite people who might be interested from more extended networks. Ask them if they would be willing to spend 10 minutes inviting people.

Email

The easiest thing to do is to send mass emails with the basic information about the event.

It's good to open with a brief personal note explaining this relates to your life. For example "I was shocked the Ford Government continues to cut x service" or "I have been inspired by how CUPE Members have fought for workplace safety but also have an amazing long-term vision to properly fund Ontario's public service." If you're emotionally involved, they will be too.

Include the basic info about time and place at the top, with a link to the Facebook event so they can invite others. After that, include any other information that you think is relevant. You can source content from the call-to-action from the Facebook event.

Phone

Live conversations in person and on the phone **are by far the best way to get people involved**. Get you Local's list of members and other contact lists and spend some time calling people to ask them to come to your event. Make sure you explain the objectives of the action, and let your enthusiasm show.

Roles

If you're organizing with volunteers, it's good to define roles. Ask some friends and allies to take on these responsibilities. It's great to have a good team going into an action, and it means that the organizers aren't stuck trying to do everything.

Organizer

One or two people should in charge of making sure that there's a schedule that's adhered to. They should also have a clear idea of what all the other roles are doing and be able to step in or find a replacement if someone doesn't show up.

You don't want to be in a situation where no one knows what is supposed to happen next. The organizer should come prepared with a schedule of how the event is going to unfold, a speakers list, some good chants.

Here's a simple schedule:

12-12:15: people arriving, a few chants to get energy up

12:15-12:45: speakers

12:45: announcements, thanks for coming, wrap up

It's good to end the event while the energy is still high, and potentially propose an after-rally activity so that people can debrief and connect. People can mill about and chat, but if the event has officially and definitively closed, it will feel more relaxed.

Emcee

If you have someone who is boisterous, funny, or high-energy, it's good to have someone keeping things flowing—leading chants, introducing speakers and delivering applause lines. This person should be prepared ahead of time, knowing who is speaking, in what order, and for how long. If someone is speaking too long, the MC has the authority to give them some subtle cues and then interrupt and move on to the next speaker. The beginning and the end of an event are what people remember, so make sure the message is clear and positive.

Photographer

If there no photos, did the event really happen? Yes, but a huge amount of the impact happens when people see the event online. That's why good photos are important. A good photographer moves their feet, and isn't afraid to get in close to fill the shot with peoples' faces, positioned next to good banners, signs, or landmarks (like the sign on a MPP's office).

Bonus points if you engage with the people you're photographing—if the photographer is engaged, frames the shot well, and gets close, the photos will be a lot more exciting to look at.

Keep the following in mind when framing a shot:

- Orient the camera for landscapes, not portraits.
- The face of the person who is the focus (e.g. the current speaker) should be in the top half of the frame, slightly to the left or to the right. If they're looking to the left, position them to the right of the frame, and vice versa.
- Keep an eye out for awkward props, and angle the camera give your subject a good background.

Think about a shot list of your action, including wide shots of the group at your location, lead banners and signs, speakers addressing the crowd, and shots of the faces of the crowd. Great candid takes can be amazing but posed shots can help convey the concentrated energy and power of the event. It's OK to take control at a certain point and get people closer together, optimize the background scenery, raise fists, etc. To keep things smooth, talk to the organizer and logistics people and get a group photo put on the schedule ahead of time.

The most important thing a photographer does, however, is **send photos immediately to lbedard@cupe.on.ca** if you want CUPE Ontario to share your action. Do not delay in the slightest. Chasing photos diminishes the impact of the day of action—the photos will be seen by thousands of people. Include a description of the event, note any important people in the photo, and send any other messaging you would like to see reflected.

If you want to get really fancy—record some video. Important things include keeping the camera steady for a few seconds before and after the shot, and of course during. The same framing rules apply, and it's also important to know where the mic is on your camera or phone, to avoid blocking it or tapping it by moving your hands.

Consider asking someone to be the Facebook live feed videographer. They, like the photographer, are up at the front, are able to hear speeches, show the crowd, and are live on a public post. But don't ask for many livefeeds because too many livefeeds means bad and dropped connections.

Media Spokesperson

This is someone who has prepared some key points to convey when talking to journalists. If you are acting as a spokesperson for the action, you will need to approach media who arrive promptly and let them know you're available for comment. If you don't, they will find other people to interview, which is fine, but it's good to make sure that the person who has prepared for the action is getting interviewed.

Be prepared to answer:

“Can you tell me what you're doing here today?”

“What do you hope to accomplish?”

“What are your groups next steps?”

By knowing how to answer these questions in advance, you will avoid the possibility of going off on a tangent or making it up on the spot. You want to communicate what's going on, why it's happening, and what the feeling of the group is.

The main thing is to talk only about the issues you want. It's ok to not answer questions, or just answer the question you want to be asked. Our instinct is to be polite and try to answer questions meant to derail the subject. That's great in every other context, but not this one. It's helpful to practice the skill of only giving the answers you want to give with a friend. Repetition is key. Say your main point over and over (far more than you would in a normal conversation!)

If you are asked something you don't know how to answer, you can say “well, I don't know about that, but what I do know is that... (and then go back to your message) ie. there are thousands of people taking action across Ontario today in solidarity and we are here today to...”

Logistics

Here are some of the kind of logistics questions you will need to answer ahead of your event:

Do you need a megaphone? Often labour councils or unions locals will have one you can use for free.

Do you need a banner? Will you have placards to hand to people when they get there? Will there be a gathering the night before to make some placards? How will those materials get to the rally, and what will happen to them afterwards?

What will the demonstration look like? How will people be positioned? Are people close together or spread out? What will be behind them in photos? Who will show up in the shot? Do we look powerful or disorganized?

It's OK to skip some of those steps and keep things very simple but it's good to have someone at least thinking about all these questions and making sure that everything that you want to happen, happens. You will want to make sure you arrive early and get set up, so that other arrivals know they are in the right place.

Media Outreach

It's good to prepare a list of local media outlets ahead of time. Often other activists, groups, union locals, or the labour council will have something like this, so it's great to ask ahead of time.

As soon as you have your details confirmed, send out a media advisory to your local media inviting them to the event.

If possible, it's great to spend 20 minutes calling media outlets to confirm they received the Media Advisory, establish a human connection, and ask them if you can count on them to be there. Media get a lot of email and messages are easily lost. For print journalism, if you've got a photographer signed up, you can let them know you can supply photos after the event if they are short on photographers.

You can work through this template to write your media advisory:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12MEQr-5xl7cjscwDozelGBAOZZcQDBDd8W1_bM_onl/edit?usp=sharing

On the day of the event itself, send a press release to the same contacts. This includes more substantial quotes from people who will be at the action, and why they're holding it. We'll include a template here as well.

Another template:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UabHPBtneiEIOYw1a2tsnwlcClziYclkWppUzTuskbc/edit?usp=sharing>

Social Media

Social media is a good place to build a narrative, noting each success and milestone in the organizing while building anticipation, to get people invested in the outcome.

Social Media (Get the word out & Amplify your success!)

Tag CUPE Ontario on Facebook & twitter (@CUPEOntario)

On Twitter, use the hashtags #CommunitiesNotCuts

The best way to tell the world about what you're doing is via Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites. Post photos and details of what's happening and you'll have people following your demonstration live via the internet!