

Local union campaign planning



GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Conservative assault of workers' rights is the biggest attack our unions have ever faced. We must mount a campaign far stronger than any we have organized in the past. We can win, but not without the active engagement of local leaders and rank-and-file members.

Campaign Planning by local unions can greatly increase the strength of labour's response to this attack. The best time to start is now!

Get ready for a planning session

- **Win a commitment to conduct a campaign planning meeting for your local.**
 - › This campaign must be a priority for all union officers and activists – not just a sub-committee.
 - › Depending on your union's structure, those in attendance at the planning meeting may include: the Local Union Executive Board, union staff and Political Action Committee members.
 - › Schedule a planning meeting and follow-up sessions to ensure that the campaign is meeting its goals.
 - › Get assistance for conducting the planning meeting if you need it.
- **Get copies of campaign materials for use at the meeting**
 - › Check with your union and at labourcouncil.ca/workersrights
- **Ask your union about its campaign plans**
 - › Does your union have its own campaign materials?
 - ☞ Does your union's campaign include a drive to get members to recommit to the union, sign a pledge, wear a button?
- **Prepare an agenda for the campaign planning meeting**
 - › This Campaign Planning Guide can be adapted to meet the needs of your union. If your local is small, you will probably want to trim a number of agenda items. This Guide can be downloaded from labourcouncil.ca

Local union **CAMPAIGN** planning **MEETING**

DRAFT PROCESS

1. Face the facts and overcome denial

- Discuss the details of the attack
 - › At the planning meeting, distribute copies of campaign materials that provide details of the Harper / Hudak attack. (See the *Labour Council Workers' Rights ALERT* and *Campaign Backgrounder*)
 - › Discuss the details of the attack at the meeting. Encourage people to speak up with questions and points of clarification.
 - › Make a note of anything that is unclear and seek clarification from background materials and/or from a union resource person.
- Think about what's at stake — have a discussion based on the following questions.
 - › Under Harper/Hudak anti-worker laws:
 - ☞ What would happen if Hudak wins the next election and members are encouraged to opt out of paying dues and/or opt out of union membership?
 - ☞ What would happen to our union's bargaining power?
 - ☞ What would happen to our collective agreement(s) – our wages and benefits?
 - ☞ What would it be like in a workplace split between members who pay dues and “free riders” who don't?

- Unions raise the wages and living standards of union members and of workers who are not union members. Unions work constantly to defend public health care, public education and countless other public assets and services. Unions support progressive social change.
 - › Under Harper/Hudak anti-worker laws:
 - ☞ What would change for our families?
 - ☞ What future would the next generation have in a low wage economy?
 - ☞ What would the impact be on our communities and on society in general?

2. Make a commitment

- › How deeply are we committed to defeating the Conservative plans?
- › How big a priority is this campaign for us as local leaders?
- › Is *each of us* ready to make this campaign a big part of our union work?
- › What money and other resources can we commit?
- › Can we commit members/staff/organizers *full-time* to the campaign?

Workers' Rights **ALERT**

Campaign news for union members



3. Set campaign goals

- What campaign goals does your local want to set? Here are a few to consider:
 - › Reduce the amount of “business as usual” in the local. Shift leadership focus and resources onto defeating the attack.
 - › Make sure that all the members of our local understand that the Conservatives’ policies will seriously harm them.
 - › Reduce the number of members who will vote Conservative.
 - › Win members (not just the activists) to participating in campaign actions.
 - › Develop new diverse leaders, young leaders. Build a stronger union.
 - › Prepare for the most effective participation ever, by our local, in the next provincial and federal elections.
 - › What else?

4. Take the message to the members

- Member support is the key to winning:
 - › Yes we want “the public” to oppose the Conservative attack. The first step is winning *hundreds of thousands* of union members to opposing the attack.

- To win member support, there is nothing more effective than face-to-face communication.

1. Identify members in each section of the membership who can be trained to talk with co-workers about the campaign issues. (Consider job classification groupings, worksite groupings, members with common language and/or cultural ties, retirees, etc.)
2. Are there groups of members who have felt excluded from the local – now is the time to rebuild.
3. If your local already has a workplace organization that can reach members face-to-face, put it to work on the campaign.
4. Train local leaders, stewards and members about the campaign issues and provide discussion skills training. Distribute *Tips for Effective Workplace Discussions*. Visit labourcouncil.ca to download the “Tips” and for information about upcoming training.
5. Make a plan to reach as many members as possible. Set goals: How many members will be engaged face-to-face, by what date?
6. Set up a buddy system, regular debriefing sessions and other supports for local leaders and members who are talking with members. It can be exciting work. It can also be very difficult. Compare experience about what works best. Support each other.

- **Use every communications tool available to build the campaign**

- › Although face-to-face is most effective, there are many ways to get the campaign message: Local union newsletter, website, member email lists, telephone “Town Halls”, Membership Meetings, committee meetings, social events, conventions, union schools...
- › When campaign actions are announced and when the next provincial election arrives, our participation will be stronger if all our communications tools are well tuned.

5. Strengthen member engagement by establishing/improving member database

- › Do you have up-to-date membership lists with home contact information?
- › Have you identified the ward/riding each member lives in - in preparation for campaigns?
- › Have you identified the languages spoken by your members?
- › Have you identified their community activities and links?

6. Take the message outside the local

- **Who can you reach with the campaign message, *beyond* your members?**
 - › What about the people your members serve through their work?
 - › Does your local have allies?
 - › How can members be encouraged to talk with family and friends about campaign issues?
 - › Who else can the local reach with the campaign message?

7. Participate in campaign events

- › There will be many campaign events in the months ahead to build opposition to the Conservative attack.
- › Get ready to support actions by workers under federal jurisdiction who are experiencing the Harper attack right now.
- › What can your local do to ensure that it is well represented at all campaign events? (Lead by example. If local leaders attend, they can bring others with them. If it is left to the usual handful of activists, the campaign will not be strong enough to win.)

8. Stay informed about campaign issues

- **Learn as much as possible about campaign issues. Follow the debate and stay up-to-date as the campaign unfolds.** Visit labourcouncil.ca and other labour websites for details.

9. Pay attention to implementation and follow-up

- › Have you identified clear campaign tasks (with goals and deadlines)?
- › Have people been assigned to each task?
- › Are the people involved in the campaign getting the attention and support they need?
- › Have you established a practice of regularly reviewing the progress of the campaign?

See *Achieving a “State of Readiness”- Preparing local unions for powerful campaigns* and the *Campaign Planning Handbook*, published by the Toronto&York Region Labour Council.

Download from labourcouncil.ca

