

TAKE ACTION ACTIVIST TOOLKIT



Breast Cancer Action Montreal
Action cancer du sein de Montréal

www.bcam.qc.ca

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BREAST CANCER ACTION MONTREAL

Breast Cancer Action Montreal (BCAM) is a non-profit community group of women and men who are sensitized to the trauma of breast cancer. BCAM educates the public about environmental toxicants and their links to breast cancer, and advocates for stricter industry regulation and stronger government policy regarding toxic chemicals in consumer products that put women at greater risk for the disease. Our work aims to improve the quality of life for women with breast cancer now and to prevent or reduce its incidence for future generations.

OUR ACTIONS

At Breast Cancer Action Montreal, we have undertaken many actions over the years. We have launched campaigns around specific issues, organized petitions and held demonstrations, including a "bed-in". All this has taught us the importance of collective action when it comes to educating and raising awareness among citizens and bringing about change in our community. We believe it is important for citizens to be informed and to have the right tools, which is why we have created this toolkit for activists and would-be activists. This is our humble contribution to global social activism, and we are happy to make it available to anyone wishing to "Take Action".



TAKE ACTION ACTIVIST TOOLKIT

The purpose of the “Take Action” activist toolkit is to equip our members and all citizens with everything they need to bring about societal change through collective action. The toolkit is divided into three sections: Communicating with Government, Working with Industry and Connecting with the Media. Each section contains advice and useful tips.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead (1901-1978) anthropologist

FIRST STEP

DEFINING THE ISSUE

Before starting a collective action, members of the group must have a good grasp of the issue. Without becoming experts, they should know enough to be clear about the changes they want to bring about.

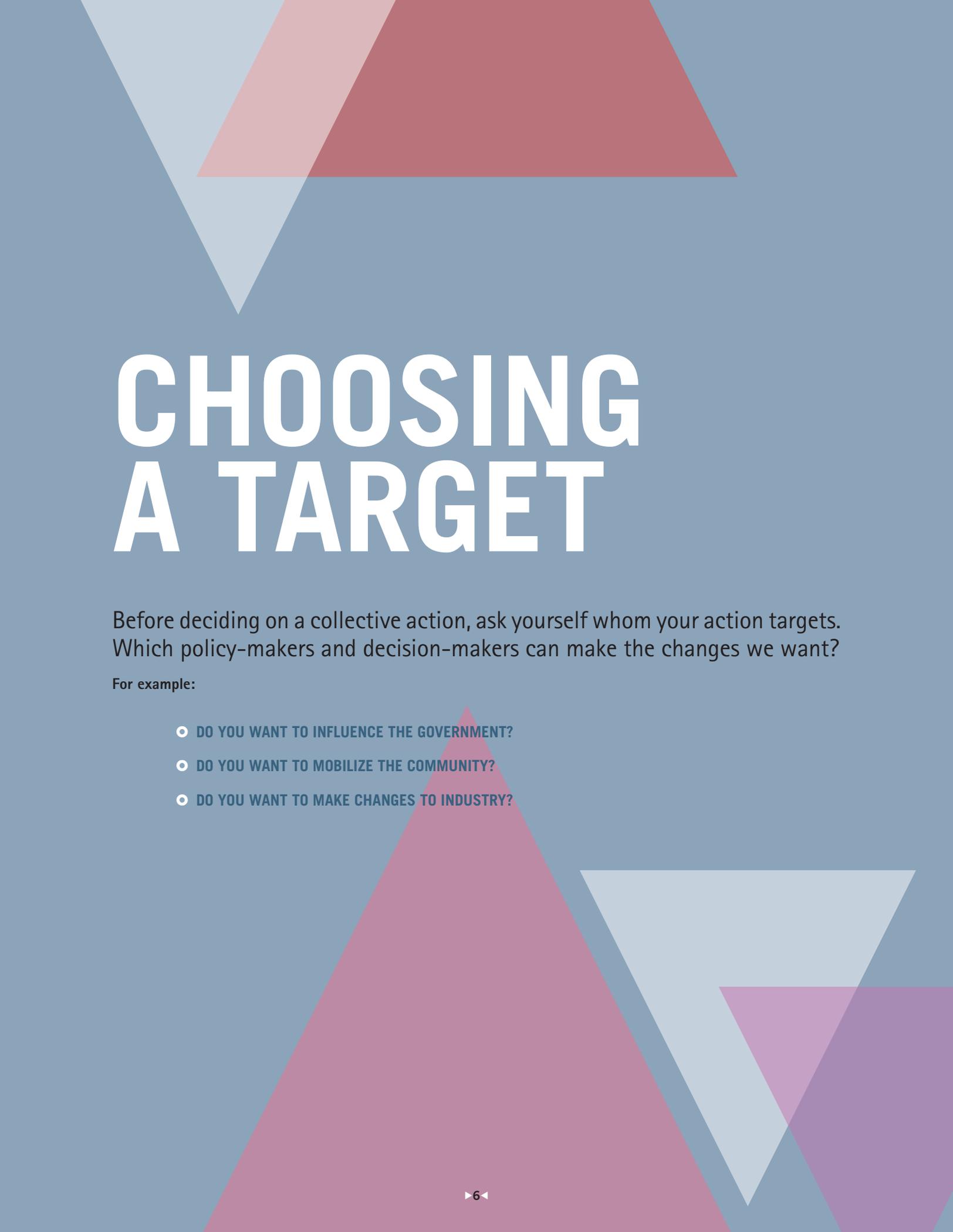
- RESEARCH THE ISSUE;
- CONSULT EXPERTS ON THE TOPIC;
- ORGANIZE AN EVENING INFORMATION SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE GROUP.

Next, make your point in clear, straightforward terms.

For example: *"I am asking the government for safe, non toxic cosmetics."*

Or: *"Help me protect my health and my family's health by eliminating toxic substances from your products."*

A word of advice: remember that your messages and communications must take into account the diversity of your members and your audience, for example different cultural backgrounds and various age groups.



CHOOSING A TARGET

Before deciding on a collective action, ask yourself whom your action targets. Which policy-makers and decision-makers can make the changes we want?

For example:

- DO YOU WANT TO INFLUENCE THE GOVERNMENT?
- DO YOU WANT TO MOBILIZE THE COMMUNITY?
- DO YOU WANT TO MAKE CHANGES TO INDUSTRY?

BRAINSTORMING TO CHOOSE AN ACTION

Once you have clearly defined the issue you want to work on and decided to whom to address your message, brainstorming is a useful group exercise.

Helpful pointers:

- **SPLIT PARTICIPANTS INTO SMALLER GROUPS, SO THAT EVERYONE HAS A CHANCE TO JOIN IN;**
- **ASK QUESTIONS TO ELICIT IDEAS, E.G. *WHAT ACTIONS CAN WE UNDERTAKE TO ELIMINATE TOXICANTS FROM OUR ENVIRONMENT? WHAT CAUSES TOXICANTS TO BE PRESENT IN OUR ENVIRONMENT?***
- **THINK OF THE GROUPS YOU ARE CONNECTED TO IN YOUR COMMUNITY (DAYCARE, SCHOOL, WORK-PLACE, SPORTS TEAM). WHAT SMALL CHANGES COULD YOU BRING TO THOSE GROUPS?**
- **WHEN YOU CAN'T FIND THE SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM, IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO TACKLE IT ... FROM ANOTHER ANGLE? E.G. *LET'S COME UP WITH MOST EXTREME IDEAS THE ON HOW TO REMOVE TOXICANTS FROM OUR ENVIRONMENT.***

CHOOSING AN ACTION

To facilitate the process, draw up a list of selection criteria.

Examples of selection criteria

- TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE RESOURCES THE ACTION REQUIRES (TIME, \$\$\$, ETC.);
- PROMOTES THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP;
- TARGETS THE REDUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL TOXICANTS;
- PUTS PRESSURE ON INDUSTRY OR GOVERNMENT OR BOTH;
- BRINGS ABOUT A CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY.

Number the action ideas and eliminate those that don't meet the selection criteria, then vote on your final choice. Voting can be by majority or consensus; choose the method that suits you best.

A word of advice: you may develop more than one good idea, but remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. Do one action at a time and see where that takes you. Don't exhaust your troops, and remember that the success of even a small action can motivate people to keep going.

ORGANIZING COLLECTIVE ACTION

Proper planning at every stage is vital to the success of the action. Define everyone's roles and tasks and set a realistic schedule. Hold regular meetings to update everyone on progress achieved.

Here is a sample action plan chart: (Workshop on personalized cards to be mailed to company XYZ)

| TASKS | PERSON(S) IN CHARGE | SCHEDULE | COST |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| COMMUNICATION | | | |
| Set a date for the workshop to design cards to be mailed to company XYZ | All participants | Date chosen: March 1 | x |
| Send email invitations to the workshop and follow up with reminders | Ms. A | February 10 Reminder February 21 | x |
| Confirm group members' attendance at the workshop | Ms. A | February 25 | x |
| Write the standard message to company XYZ stating your requests | Mr. F | February 14 | x |
| Promote your action in the media and on social media (Facebook, Twitter, emails, press releases) | Ms. U | February 10 to March 1 | x |
| LOGISTICS | | | |
| Book a meeting room | Mr. H | Mr. H | X |
| Buy the materials you will need to make cards (paper, scissors, glue, pictures for decoupage etc.) | Ms. S | Ms. S | \$125 |
| Coffee and snacks | Mr. H | Mr. H | \$40 |
| Mail out cards | Mr. F | Mr. F | \$25 |
| Promote your action in the media and social media (Facebook, Twitter, emails, press releases) | Ms. U | Ms. U | x |
| FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION OF THE ACTION | | | |
| Set a date for the follow-up meeting | Ms. A | April 1 | x |
| Draw up an agenda for the meeting | Mr. F | March 12 | x |
| Send email invitations to the workshop and follow-up with reminders | Ms. A | March 18 Reminder March 25 | x |
| Confirm group members' attendance at the follow-up meeting | Ms. A | March 28 | x |
| Promote your action in the media and social media (Facebook, Twitter, emails, press releases) | Ms. U | April 1 to 4 | x |



THE TOOLBOX

A word of advice: personal stories about an issue carry a lot of weight with governments, the media and corporations. Don't hesitate to include them in your communication plan. Also, remember that every step of the action is an opportunity to promote what you are doing and increase the visibility of your action in the media.

COMMUNICATING WITH GOVERNMENT

WRITING TO THE GOVERNMENT

Writing a letter to the government is a first step to express your concerns to your elected representatives. It's also a way for politicians to gauge the public's interest of an issue. Such letters matter and carry weight with our elected representatives.

Helpful pointers:

- WRITE ON YOUR OWN BEHALF, AS A CITIZEN OR A VOTER;
- PERSONALIZE YOUR LETTER. STANDARD-FORM LETTERS IN WHICH YOU FILL IN YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION ARE USEFUL, BUT CARRY LESS WEIGHT THAN PERSONALIZED LETTERS;
- KEEP YOUR LETTER SHORT (UNDER A PAGE) AND TO THE POINT. STATE YOUR CONCERNS AND WHAT YOU ARE ASKING THE GOVERNMENT TO DO;
- IF YOU CAN'T SAY EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO ON ONE PAGE, ENCLOSE THE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION, CLEARLY IDENTIFIED, IN A SEPARATE ATTACHMENT TO THE LETTER;
- MAKE SPECIFIC REQUESTS, E.G. I AM ASKING YOU TO VOTE AGAINST THIS BILL OR I AM ASKING YOU TO MAKE XYZ CHANGES TO THIS LAW/REGULATION;
- WORK ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE IS REASONABLE AND THAT THE OFFICIAL TO WHOM YOU ARE WRITING IS NOT AWARE OF YOUR SPECIFIC ISSUE. ASSUME THAT THE PERSON IS ON YOUR SIDE AND WANTS TO REMEDY THE SITUATION;
- USE THE CORRECT NAME AND TITLE OF THE PERSON TO WHOM YOU ARE WRITING;
- GIVE YOUR LETTER A TITLE THAT ENCAPSULATES YOUR REQUESTS, SO THAT IT CAN BE FORWARDED MORE QUICKLY TO THE PERSON IN CHARGE OF THE FILE;
- BE SURE TO DATE YOUR LETTER, AND ALWAYS INCLUDE A RETURN ADDRESS;
- ASK FOR A REPLY.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

No postage is required on letters addressed to the Prime Minister or to Members of Parliament. Such letters should be addressed as follows:

Mr. or Ms. XYZ M.P.
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

You will find your MNA's contact information here:
<http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/deputes/index.html>

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

You will find your City Councillor's contact information here:
<http://www.mamrot.gouv.qc.ca/repertoire-des-municipalites/>

DRAFTING A PETITION

A petition is a good way to act on an issue important to you. Before starting, ask yourself the following questions:

What do I want to change?

Set yourself a realistic and specific goal. Asking a politician to end world poverty is clearly too broad and vague, but you could ask for increased funding for research into the environmental links to breast cancer.

Who can make the changes I want?

Choose an influential decision-maker who has the power to act. Alternatively, enlist a decision-maker as an ally: for example, a mayor who can forward your petition to a higher level of government.

What could get people interested in your petition?

Illustrate your issue with a personal story to which other people can relate.

If you want to start a petition online, you will find guidelines as well as free hosting on various websites. Here are two options:

- http://www.activism.com/en_US/
- https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/start_a_petition/?source=splh

STRATEGY FOR COLLECTING SIGNATURES

Why launch a petition?

It's a way to put pressure on the powers that be, and it can help you recruit supporters and mobilize people to join your cause. A petition can:

- ILLUSTRATE PUBLIC INTEREST IN A SPECIFIC ISSUE;
- INFORM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT AN ISSUE;
- GIVE VISIBILITY TO YOUR ORGANIZATION OR GROUP;
- RECRUIT SUPPORTERS FOR FUTURE ACTION;
- PUT PRESSURE ON ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES.

The success of a petition also depends on your signature strategy. Here are some tips:

- DECIDE ON THE NUMBER OF SIGNATURES YOU WANT TO COLLECT AND BY WHAT DATE;
- FIND GOOD SPOTS TO COLLECT SIGNATURES, SUCH AS SUBWAY ENTRANCES, COMMUNITY CENTRES, MARKETS, DOOR TO DOOR;
- COLLECT SIGNATURES ONLINE, VIA FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND EMAILS.

ADDRESSING A PETITION TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Petitions to the Prime Minister or Members of Parliament may be sent by mail or online. No particular format is required.

However, if you want your petition to be officially tabled in the House of Commons, you must:

- SELECT AN MP WILLING TO TABLE THE PETITION (IN HARD COPY) ON YOUR BEHALF;
- MAKE SURE THAT YOUR ISSUE FALLS WITHIN FEDERAL JURISDICTION. [CLICK HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION;
- MAKE SURE THAT YOUR PETITION COMPLIES WITH HOUSE OF COMMONS FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS. (E.G. THE PETITION MUST BE HANDWRITTEN, TYPED, PRINTED OR PHOTOCOPIED ON STANDARD SIZED PAPER, I.E. 8 1/2 BY 11 OR 8 1/2 BY 14 INCHES). [CLICK HERE](#) TO SEE THE REQUIREMENTS;
- COLLECT AT LEAST 25 VALID SIGNATURES OF CANADIAN RESIDENTS TOGETHER WITH THE SIGNATOR-IES' ADDRESSES;
- USE MODERATE, MEASURED AND RESPECTFUL WORDING IN YOUR PETITION.

A word of advice: when addressing a petition to the federal government, make sure from the outset that it meets House of Commons requirements, even if you don't intend to have it tabled officially; you never know when an opportunity might arise. For example, a politician might find your issue of public interest and offer to bring your petition to the floor of the House.

ADDRESSING A PETITION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

Any resident of Quebec may, through an MNA, send a petition to the National Assembly.

To do so, you must:

- **START BY CHOOSING AN MNA. REMEMBER THAT MNAS ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO PRESENT YOUR PETITION. MOREOVER, AN MNA WHO AGREES TO PRESENT YOUR PETITION IS UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO ENDORSE ITS CONTENT;**
- **IN 250 WORDS OR LESS, DRAFT YOUR PETITION, EXPLAINING THE ISSUE AND ASKING FOR SPECIFIC ACTION;**
- **MAKE SURE THAT THE ISSUE FALLS WITHIN PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION. [CLICK HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION;**
- **USE MODERATE, MEASURED AND RESPECTFUL WORDING IN YOUR PETITION.**

For a petition to qualify for presentation to the National Assembly, it must be posted and signed on the National Assembly's website. [Click here](#) to find out how to do this.

To create a petition on paper, you must comply with National Assembly formatting requirements. [Click here](#) to see these rules.

ADDRESSING A PETITION TO QUEBEC MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS

Équiterre's website explains how to draft a petition to municipal councillors in Quebec.

Click on: <http://www.equiterre.org/en/news/how-to-write-a-petition>

MEETING POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

You are entitled to meet your federal, provincial or municipal elected representatives to express concerns or put forward requests about an issue you care about.

Helpful pointers:

Before the meeting:

- **PREPARE YOUR ARGUMENTS IN CLEAR, CONCISE AND SPECIFIC TERMS. DISCUSS ONLY ONE ISSUE PER MEETING. TAKE INTO ACCOUNT YOUR OPPONENTS' OPINIONS AND PREPARE COUNTERARGUMENTS. MAKE SURE TO CONNECT YOUR ISSUE TO THE RELEVANT LEGISLATION (LAWS AND REGULATIONS);**
- **PUT TOGETHER AN INFORMATION FOLDER FOR THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE; INCLUDE A DOCUMENT (TWO PAGES OR LESS) SUMMARIZING THE ISSUE AND YOUR REQUESTS, AS WELL AS PERTINENT REFERENCE MATERIALS SUCH AS FACTSHEETS, CHARTS, STATISTICS ETC.**
- **FOR GROUP MEETINGS, APPOINT A SPOKESPERSON AND GET TOGETHER BEFOREHAND TO AGREE ON THE PRESENTATION.**

Making an appointment:

- IF YOU WANT TO DISCUSS AN ISSUE WITH A POLITICIAN, IT'S BEST TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT;
- WHEN YOU CALL TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT, STATE YOUR TOPIC AND HOW MUCH TIME YOU THINK YOU WILL NEED (GENERALLY, YOU WON'T BE GIVEN MORE THAN HALF AN HOUR);
- BE ON TIME;
- DON'T BE UPSET IF THE POLITICIAN CAN'T MEET YOU IN PERSON AND DELEGATES THE MEETING TO AN ASSISTANT. TREAT THE ASSISTANT WITH THE SAME COURTESY AND CONSIDERATION AS YOU WOULD THE POLITICIAN, SINCE HE OR SHE MIGHT BE ABLE TO ADVANCE YOUR CAUSE. THE POLITICIAN'S TEAM IS THERE TO HELP AND ADVISE THE ASSISTANT.

During the meeting:

- EXPLAIN HOW THE ISSUE AFFECTS THE POLITICIAN'S CONSTITUENCY AND THE GENERAL POPULATION;
- SET OUT YOUR FACTS CONCISELY, IN AN ORDERLY FASHION AND IN POSITIVE TERMS. ILLUSTRATE YOUR POINTS WITH ANECDOTES OR PERSONAL STORIES;
- ASK QUESTIONS AND STIMULATE THE DISCUSSION. E.G. HOW CAN YOU HELP OUR CAUSE? MAYBE SOMETHING MORE SPECIFIC WOULD BE BETTER LIKE "WOULD YOU STAND IN LINE WITH US WHEN WE ASK...".
- REMEMBER THAT YOUR GOAL IS TO PERSUADE AND INFLUENCE RATHER THAN INSULT THE POLITICIAN;
- BE COURTEOUS AND RESPECTFUL. THANK THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE FOR TAKING THE TIME TO MEET YOU.

After the meeting:

- DO A DEBRIEF OF THE MEETING;
- PLAN THE NEXT STEPS: ASKING FOR ANOTHER MEETING, DOING MORE RESEARCH, LAUNCHING A PETITION, MEETING WITH OPPONENTS, ETC.

For more ideas on how to prepare for a meeting with a politician, see this website:

- http://dawn.thot.net/advocacy_toolkit.html

WORKING WITH INDUSTRY

WRITING TO COMPANIES

Writing letters to companies is a good way to let them know what you think of their products and their corporate culture. It's also a way for consumers to put pressure on companies and demand changes. Remember that you have the final say when it comes to buying or not buying a product. Consumers have clout!

Helpful pointers:

- **CHOOSE THE PERSON TO WHOM TO ADDRESS YOUR LETTER. DEPENDING TO THE ISSUE AND WHAT YOU ARE ASKING FOR, YOU CAN ADDRESS YOUR LETTER TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENT OR DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMPANY OR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS;**
- **BE RESPECTFUL AND CONCISE. THE FIRST LINES OF YOUR LETTER SHOULD CLEARLY SPELL OUT THE PURPOSE OF YOUR REQUEST;**
- **MAKE EVERYTHING FIT ON ONE PAGE. TIME IS MONEY IN THE BUSINESS WORLD AND YOUR LETTER WILL BE READ VERY QUICKLY;**
- **BE SPECIFIC IN YOUR REQUESTS AND SUGGEST SOLUTIONS THAT WILL ENABLE YOU TO CONTINUE BUYING THE COMPANY'S PRODUCTS;**
- **SET A DEADLINE BY WHICH YOU WANT YOUR REQUESTS TO BE MET. IF THE PROBLEM YOU WANT THE COMPANY TO FIX IS AN ISSUE OF SUBSTANCE, SET A REALISTIC TIMELINE AND RECOGNIZE THAT THIS CAN TAKE TIME;**
- **ASK FOR A REPLY TO YOUR LETTER AND INCLUDE A RETURN ADDRESS;**
- **ATTACH ALL DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO THE ISSUE.**

CONTACTING COMPANIES BY PHONE

You can also use the customer service line to communicate your concerns to companies and put pressure on them to make the necessary changes.

Helpful pointers:

- **CONDUCT YOUR ACTION AS A GROUP. ASK EACH MEMBER IN TURN TO MAKE A CALL, ACCORDING TO A PREDETERMINED SCHEDULE AND ROTATION;**

- **WRITE A SCRIPT THAT YOU CAN REFER TO IF NECESSARY. FOR EXAMPLE:**

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. I buy your products regularly and I really like to use them, but it worries me to find out that a lot of your cosmetics contain toxic substances that could potentially be harmful to my health, like parabens, formaldehyde, triclosan and phthalates.

Could you please pass this message along to your company officials so that they may remove these toxic substances from your products? Thank you very much!

- **PREPARE TALKING POINTS SO THAT YOU ARE READY TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION IF THE PERSON AT THE OTHER END EXPRESSES INTEREST IN THE ISSUE. FOR EXAMPLE:**

Some of your products contain chemicals associated with cancer, birth defects and fertility problems. I am referring, for example, to parabens in your creams, phthalates in your perfumes and soaps, and formaldehyde in your mascaras.

Have you heard of The Toxic Twenty List of Cosmetic Ingredients to Avoid? (If the answer is no, refer the person to the website.)

If the company implemented a plan to eliminate the Toxic Twenty, that would give me peace of mind and reassure me that the products I buy are safe for my family and me.

- • **BE POLITE. THANK THE PERSON FOR HAVING TAKEN THE TIME TO SPEAK WITH YOU;**
- • **TELL YOUR STORY. EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS;**
- • **INFORM THE COMPANY'S REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR REQUESTS.**

MEETING A COMPANY MANAGER

You can also meet a company manager in person to express your concerns and requests.

Helpful pointers:

- **COMPILE AN INFORMATION FOLDER WITH A ONE-PAGE SUMMARY OF YOUR CONCERNS AND REQUESTS WITH RESPECT TO THE COMPANY AS WELL AS RELEVANT REFERENCE MATERIALS (FLYERS, PETITIONS, SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES);**

- **WRITE A SCRIPT THAT YOU CAN REFER TO IF NECESSARY;**

- **BE POLITE AND THANK THE MANAGER FOR TAKING THE TIME TO SEE YOU;**

- **PREPARE TALKING POINTS SO THAT YOU ARE READY TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION IF THE MANAGER EXPRESSES INTEREST IN THE ISSUE;**

- **SHARE YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.**

CONNECTING WITH THE MEDIA

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

Before writing a press release, you must decide whether its purpose will be to invite people to an event or to provide information on an issue.

INVITATION PRESS RELEASE

This form of press release invites the media to an event. It should state the date, time, location and purpose of the event, and name any guests of honour.

INFORMATION PRESS RELEASE

This form of press release informs the media about an issue or news item of public interest. It must provide answers to any basic questions the media might ask.

Before you get started, ask yourself the following questions:

- **WHO IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?**
- **WHAT KEY POINTS DO YOU WANT TO GET ACROSS?**
- **WHY DO YOU NEED MEDIA COVERAGE?**
- **WHICH MEDIA DO YOU WANT TO REACH?**
- **DO YOU HAVE A CONTACT PERSON IN CHARGE OF FOLLOWING UP WITH THE MEDIA? IS THAT PERSON PROPERLY TRAINED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM JOURNALISTS?**

Helpful pointers:

- CHOOSE A SHORT, PUNCHY TITLE. YOUR TITLE IS THE FIRST THING JOURNALISTS SEE: IF IT DOESN'T GRAB THEM, THEY WILL PROBABLY NOT BOTHER READING FURTHER;
- THE TITLE MUST CONTAIN THE KEY POINT OF THE PRESS RELEASE;
- THE OPENING PARAGRAPH MUST SPELL OUT THE FOLLOWING: WHAT, WHO, WHERE, WHEN, HOW AND WHY. JOURNALISTS GET MANY SUCH RELEASES AND MAY NOT READ YOURS ALL THE WAY THROUGH, SO YOU MUST GET THE MAIN POINTS ACROSS RIGHT FROM THE START;
- LATER PARAGRAPHS CAN PROVIDE BACKGROUND INFORMATION, STORIES ABOUT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED AND DETAILS OF THE IMPACT THE ISSUE COULD HAVE ON YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE;
- INSERT QUOTES FROM THE PEOPLE MENTIONED IN THE PRESS RELEASE. JOURNALISTS MAY NOT HAVE THE TIME TO FOLLOW UP WITH YOU AND IT MAKES IT EASIER FOR THEM IF THEY CAN USE YOUR QUOTES;
- KEEP YOUR TEXT TO ONE PAGE OR LESS;
- BE CLEAR AND CONCISE;
- STICK TO AN APPROPRIATE FORMAT, SUCH AS:

Press release

For immediate release

Title

Place & date

First paragraph: *What, who, when, where, how, why.*

Following paragraphs: *Context, background, persons involved, impact on the population, quotes.*

-30-

Media contact: Name and contact details

ISSUING A PRESS RELEASE

There are various channels through which you can issue a press release.

- THE [CNW NEWS WIRE SERVICE](#) IS A PAID SERVICE THAT SENDS RELEASES TO THE MEDIA ACROSS CANADA;
- YOU CAN ALSO GET IN TOUCH WITH JOURNALISTS IN PERSON. THEIR PERSONAL CONTACT DETAILS MAY BE POSTED ON THEIR PAPER'S OR TV/RADIO STATION'S WEBSITES. IN SOME CASES, IT IS BETTER TO SEND A PERSONALIZED RELEASE TO EACH PERSON YOU WANT TO REACH RATHER THAN DOING A MASS MAILING. THIS APPROACH REQUIRES YOU TO SEARCH OUT WHICH JOURNALISTS WRITE ABOUT TOPICS RELATED TO YOUR ISSUE;
- FOLLOW UP WITH JOURNALISTS TO MAKE SURE THEY RECEIVED YOUR RELEASE;
- SEND OUT YOUR RELEASE AS EARLY IN THE DAY AS POSSIBLE;
- DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT JOURNALISTS VIA TWITTER, LINKEDIN AND FACEBOOK, AND ATTACH A LINK TO YOUR RELEASE;
- POST THE PRESS RELEASE ON YOUR WEBSITE AND/OR BLOG;
- EMAIL THE PRESS RELEASE TO YOUR PARTNERS, MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS.

USING EMAIL TO PROMOTE YOUR ACTION

Email is a good way to mobilize your troops.

Helpful pointers:

- BE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC. IS YOUR PURPOSE TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT AN ISSUE? COLLECT SIGNATURES ON A PETITION? ISSUE A PRESS RELEASE? EXPAND YOUR NETWORK? INVITE PEOPLE TO AN EVENT?
- APPOINT SOMEONE TO REPLY TO EMAILS AND MANAGE YOUR VIRTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH MEMBERS;
- CREATE A MAILING LIST. IT SHOULD INCLUDE YOUR MEMBERS, SUPPORTERS, VOLUNTEERS, THE MEDIA AND ANYONE WITH WHOM YOU REGULARLY COMMUNICATE.

When emailing people to ask them to join an action:

- WRITE A SHORT, FACTUAL TEXT. IT IS TEMPTING TO PROVIDE A DETAILED ANALYSIS, BUT IF YOUR PURPOSE IS TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO ACT, GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT;
- GIVE YOUR EMAIL A HEADING. THE SUBJECT LINE IS THE FIRST THING RECIPIENTS SEE; THE MORE PERSUASIVE IT IS, THE GREATER THE CHANCE THAT YOUR MESSAGE WILL BE READ;
- IDENTIFY YOURSELF AND PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS;
- IF YOU ARE ASKING PEOPLE TO TAKE ACTION AND COMMUNICATE WITH DECISION-MAKERS, INCLUDE THEIR CONTACT DETAILS IN YOUR EMAIL;
- BE SURE TO COPY RECIPIENTS ON BCC (BLIND CARBON COPY) TO PROTECT THEIR PRIVACY AND SAFEGUARD YOUR MAILING LIST;
- BEFORE PUBLISHING YOUR EMAIL, SEND IT TO YOURSELF OR TO A COLLEAGUE. PROOFREAD IT AND CORRECT ANY LINE BREAKS OR OTHER FORMATTING PROBLEMS. CLICK ON ALL URLS IN THE MESSAGE TO MAKE SURE THEY WORK PROPERLY.

USING FACEBOOK AND TWITTER FOR YOUR ACTION

FACEBOOK

Facebook offers multiple ways to promote your action. You can:

- PUBLICIZE YOUR ACTION ON THE FACEBOOK PAGES OF THE GROUP'S MEMBERS;
- CREATE A DEDICATED FACEBOOK PAGE; YOU WILL NEED TO DESIGNATE SOMEONE TO UPDATE IT;
- USE FACEBOOK TO RECRUIT PEOPLE TO JOIN YOUR ACTION;
- USE FACEBOOK TO PUBLICIZE YOUR WEBSITE OR BLOG;
- POST SHORT, PUNCHY MESSAGES; INSERT PHOTOS, VIDEOS AND URL LINKS;
- POST QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION AND GET FEEDBACK.

TWITTER

Twitter is a platform on which users post comments or updates of 140 characters or less. It's a quick way to let people know what's going on – events, petitions, actions or items of public interest.

Twitter can also be used to:

- **RECRUIT PEOPLE TO JOIN YOUR ACTION;**
- **PUBLICIZE THE ACTION (BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER);**
- **EXPAND YOUR NETWORK OF SUPPORTERS.**

USING HASHTAGS (#)

When a hashtagged tweet is sent from a public account, anyone interested in the topic can read it. It's a good idea to make frequent use of hashtags if you want to connect with a wide audience. Hashtags also allow other activists with similar interests to find and follow you on Twitter.

CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE ACTIONS

When choosing an action, be creative. Bed-ins or night vigils, for example, can be effective alternatives to conventional forms of action. Don't be afraid of doing something bold and novel to draw the attention of the public, decision-makers and the media.

Here are some examples of creative actions you could consider:

- RETURN PRODUCTS TO MANUFACTURERS OR MERCHANTS (“*WE DON'T WANT THESE TOXIC SUBSTANCES IN OUR PRODUCTS.*”);
- CONDUCT A PHONE CAMPAIGN VIA MANUFACTURERS’ OR INDUSTRIES’ CONSUMER INFORMATION LINES;
- ORGANIZE A DANCE FLASHMOB;
- CREATE A COLLECTIVE SCULPTURE, USING PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN TOXICANTS, AND SET IT UP IN A PUBLIC LOCATION;
- HOLD AN EDUCATIONAL PICNIC IN A PUBLIC LOCATION.

Dear activists, the ball is now in your court. Good luck with all your future actions!

LINKS TO OTHER ACTIVIST TOOLKITS

IN ENGLISH

Breast Cancer Action : <http://www.bcaction.org/resources/breast-cancer-action-toolkits/>

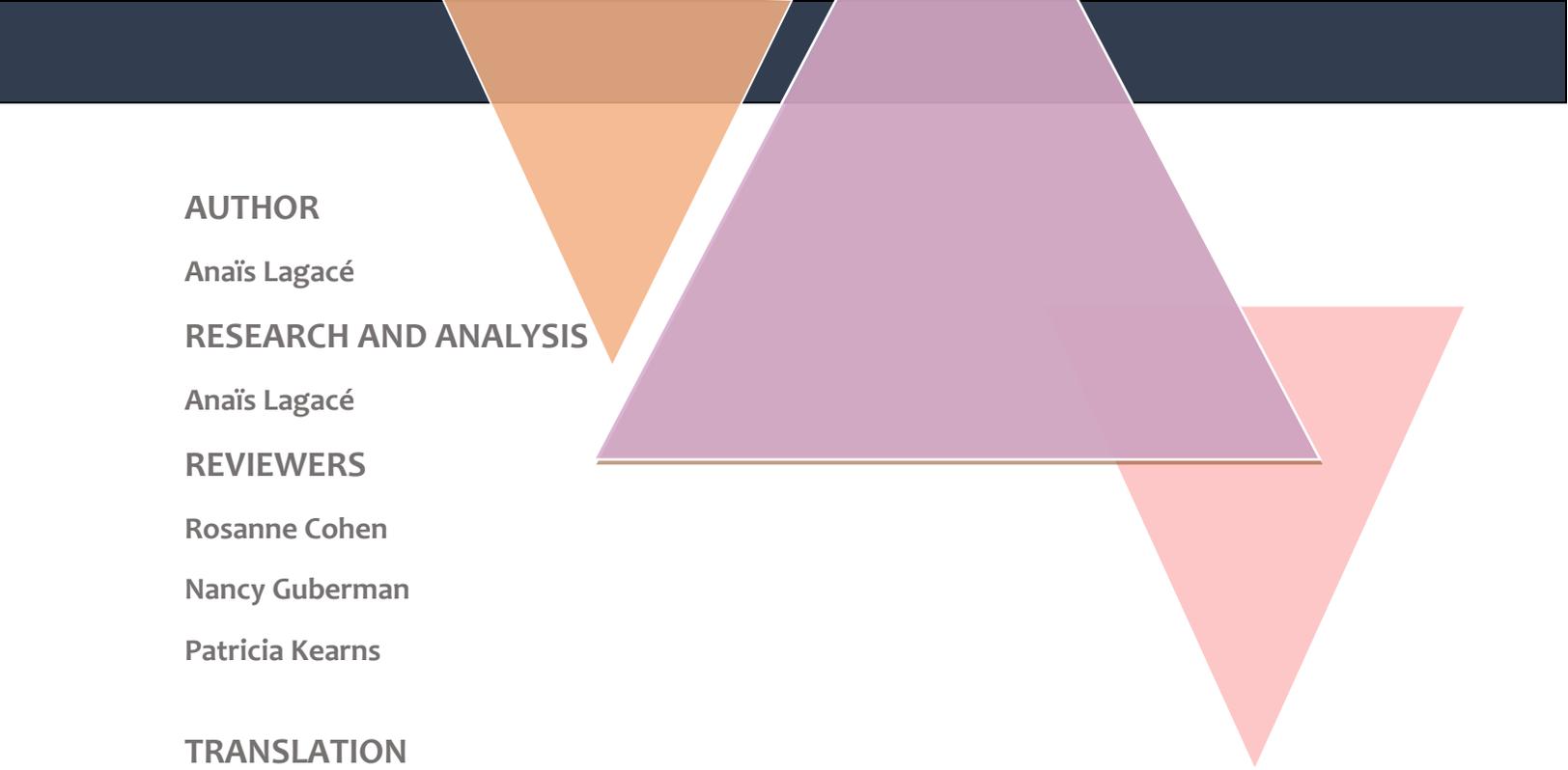
Amnesty international : <http://www.amnestyusa.org/get-involved/lead-in-your-community/activist-tools>

Student PIRGs : <http://www.studentpirgs.org/sp/student-pirgs-activist-toolkit>

The campaign for safe cosmetics : <http://safecosmetics.org/article.php?id=1156>

IN FRENCH

http://tig.phpwebhosting.com/guidetoaction/Guide_to_Action_fr.pdf



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August 2014

THIS TOOLKIT WAS PRODUCED WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF
THE CATHERINE DONNELLY FOUNDATION.