## While you should be forceful about your issues, don't get drawn into any heated discussions - this will do nothing to help your cause. Don't threaten to toss the politician out of office in the next election. Rather, focus on conveying the support in the

- comfortable with the media and can use plain language when discussing the issues. Before contacting the media, ensure the issue is "newsworthy" - you have to convince media that your issue is relevant to your community and make it easy for them to understand the local impact.
- issue and its impact and usually includes a quote from someone. A contact person and phone number is required at the end of the story so the media can follow-up with a personal interview. **3** Send a media advisory. An advisory contains a short summary of the issue and an event (media conference, rally,
- phone number for more information. Remember to include all relevant information about the event – time, location, purpose and description. your advisory or release has been sent. Remember to stick to your key messages, and remember

who your audience is - the patients who deserve quality

- Try to anticipate in advance the questions you may be asked and craft answers ahead of the interview. Never exaggerate facts – always be truthful or you risk damaging your credibility. Don't allow emotion to get the better of you. You may be angry, or the reporter may attempt to make you angry, but remain calm and focused on the issue at hand.

could be quoted.

open forum, etc.) that is occurring. This should be sent a day or two before the event and include a contact person and **4** You may find it useful to make follow-up phone calls after

statements that you can back up as truthful.

Fax: 416-964-8864

You have several options, as follows: Phone your local assignment editors and "pitch" (or sell) your story. Introduce yourself, summarize what's happening and provide brief but relevant details of the story. Be prepared to be interviewed on the spot if the reporter is interested. **2** Send a media release. A media release summarizes the

If you don't understand a question, feel free to ask for

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**Interview tips:** 

**ENGAGE YOUR CO-WORKERS** There are many ways to take action to fight for quality patient care: Engage members to write about nursing issues on their Facebook pages, or tweet about them.

They can also e-mail or write to their MPP, their local media

CLICK ON TABS FOR SPECIFIC TIPS or SCROLL DOCUMENT

Guide to

**Local Action** 

**Tips on What to Do** When Action is Needed Now

**LOCAL ACTION IS VERY EFFECTIVE** 

Ontario undergoes yet more rapid change.

Members of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) are familiar with the challenges we face as health care in

Registered nurses, allied health professionals and ONA nursing student affiliate members are aware of the impact of bed closures, service and nursing cuts on patients.

While your Union effectively advocates of behalf of ONA members at the provincial level, local action to advocate for quality patient care in individual communities is very effective.

ONA has developed a number of tools and techniques to assist you with your efforts locally - the Guide to Political Action, a Political Action Pocket Guide, and the monthly

This package is meant to be a very convenient and easyto-use set of tips and techniques to keep handy and refer to

Just drop us an e-mail at onamail@ona.org and we'll continue to develop tools to help ONA members become even stronger advocates for the nursing profession and for

the patients who rely on us for quality patient care.

Has your employer announced cuts at your health care facility? Are you ready to take action, to engage your colleagues and your community? Identify your key

Remember, speaking out means you are fulfilling your role as patient advocate.

For action to be taken, people must be aware of what has happened. Communicate with as many people as you can

ONA provincial office – ONA tracks nursing cuts and uses the information in a multitude of ways, from media relations efforts and website postings to one-on-one meetings with

about what's happened and how it impacts them.

Political Action calendar.

when faced with a local issue.

Your ideas and comments are welcomed.

**KEY MESSAGES: TELL PEOPLE** 

messages and tell people.

Don't forget to inform:

government officials.

Your family and friends.

Other health-care unions.

The following tips will help:

Be confident

Stay focused

Look for opportunities

impact them.

alternatives.

first for resolving the issue.

employer just prior to the event. This could be as simple as sending an e-mail or making a phone call just before the event or just before your media advisory

or simply speak to their friends and neighbours about what is happening.

If holding a rally or information picket, encourage their participation.

your issue.

care in your area.

involved in your actions.

**ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY** 

conference to drive home the impact of nursing cuts on the

community.

Hold a media

Organize an open forum to help rally the support of the community. This can be a very effective way of expanding knowledge and engaging your

conference to discuss

Other ideas for engaging members:

Hold a "theme day" at work. Choose a theme ("cutting")

Organize a postcard campaign (ONA can help).

nurses, cutting patient care" for instance), have members wear a specific colour or ONA buttons or a ribbon signifying

is sent.

Your ONA Regional Vice-President.

The media (or ask ONA to work with you to do so).

**USE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS** 

ONA members already possess all the raw skills needed to advocate for quality patient care it's simply a matter of focusing on what you're trying to achieve and using a few tips and techniques to accomplish your goals.

You know your issues, your employment conditions and you know how cuts are impacting patients. There's no need to be

nervous when speaking to others about these issues.

Remain optimistic – encourage others to take action and remind them that they have a voice and should use it.

When people mobilize, changes can happen!

Once you've developed your key messages, remember to repeat, repeat, repeat them. The key messages that are used with the media are the same messages that you should use with politicians, the community and others.

Not all advocacy efforts happen in the media. Talk to people every opportunity you have and tell them how changes will

Be aware of opportunities to speak out in the media. For instance, think about writing an on-line comment to your

When first told of cuts or other actions, it's natural to feel angry. However, it is important to remain professional in all your dealings with your employer.

DO keep the discussion focused on the impact on RNs,

**DO** propose ways of working with your employer to find alternative plans – can you find other savings? Do others

 DO remind your employer of the College requirements for providing safe patient care. Will cuts impact your ability to meet nursing standards? If so, say so and propose

**DON'T** threaten to go to the media. Explore every option

**DO** plan to take action to inform your community and media of the issue if there is no movement on your employer's part.

**DON'T** blindside your employer. If you have organized a rally or information picket, it's only fair to inform your

DON'T organize an event on hospital property unless you have permission. It is acceptable to hold an information picket or rally on municipal property (i.e., the sidewalk near

your hospital) if you have municipal approval.

Then, if there is no movement on your employer's part:

other health-care workers and your patients.

have ideas that could render cuts unnecessary?

TIP#

local newspaper or a letter to the editor.

**DEALING WITH YOUR EMPLOYER** 

O Your co-workers.

TIP# 1

Have your colleagues sign a preprinted postcard and deliver them to your local MPP or the Health Minister. Organize a trip to Queen's Park to attend question period. Arrange for an opposition party member to ask a question about health

 DO remember to engage nursing students in your efforts. Students are enthused and energetic about becoming

 DO remember to always ask for the phone numbers and e-mail addresses of those who attend rallies, pickets or other events. A phone call to follow up is still the best way to encourage participation and confirm attendance. Personal, individual e-mails can be effective too.

what's happening locally to health care. Remember to follow the tips in the engaging the media section. Organize a rally or information picket to protest cuts. Schedule a lunch-hour rally or march near your health-care facility. Or organize an information table at a shopping mall or other public place (with permission). Contact ONA for

community - encourage both nurses and members of the community to tell their stories of how cuts impact their health care. Invite the media to attend and ensure you have an easy way for attendees to send a message to their MPP.

ONA's provincial office has a number of resources available to help you and your co-workers, friends and family. ONA's Student Nurse affiliate members will want to be involved and other unions

Communications & Government Relations Team

The Communications & Government Relations Team (CGRT) can help you in a myriad of ways. From creating a flyer tailored to your needs to use in a rally or information picket to creating a webpage for your community to visit with a link to e-mail your local MPP, the team will help you with your efforts. Help with media relations, speaking notes and

organizing open forums and rallies is also available.

You can also refer to ONA's Guide to Political Action or ONA's Pocket Guide to Political Action. Both are available by contacting ONA's Communications & Government

In addition to involving co-workers in communications efforts, you'll need to designate roles at rallies and information pickets. Don't hesitate to ask people to help with many of the tasks that need to be performed – or to

onamail@ona.org or cgrintake@ona.org

help with flyers or other information.

**USE ALL RESOURCES AVAILABLE** 

Remember, you're not alone!

will likely join you in your fight.

Relations Team.

Social Media

developments.

advocate.

Whatever the issue, you must first define the level of government (municipal, provincial, federal) that you should be lobbying. In the case of nursing cuts, your local MPP, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and/or the Premier

are appropriate.

concise way.

Your Co-Workers

ONA Provincial Office

Take advantage of:

DO use social media to expand your reach. Post an event on Facebook and tweet about it while it's happening.

simply write to their MPP. ONA Student Nurse Affiliate Members Student nurses have helped distribute flyers, have spoken out at open forums and have done media interviews to provide their perspective. They're enthusiastic and want to be involved contact onamail@ona.org to learn how to involve them. And if you're inexperienced at using Social Media to get your message out, student nurses can help you or work with you to do so.

Remember that those who are affected most are their own best advocates. Spreading the word about cuts and giving simple instructions about what can be done to help stop them via e-mail messages that members can share with their friends and families can make your message "go viral" and have a farther reach than you ever imagined.

Use your Facebook page to alert others to events/

developments/events as they're happening.

Governments like to create a divide between "taxpayers" and members of public-sector unions, such as registered nurses. However, we are all taxpayers and we all vote. It's highly advisable to engage the appropriate government officials to discuss your issues and you can do this in a number of ways.

The best way to ensure elected officials understand the issue and its impact is to meet with them face-to-face. To do so, simply contact the politician's office to set up a meeting time and date; explain who you are, why you're requesting the meeting, and who you will bring with you. Once the meeting is set, confirm it in

**Prior to your meeting**, you should have a briefing session with those who will attend the meeting with you. As with media, you will need to be able to explain the issue in a clear and

writing with a letter to the politician's office.

**Pre-meeting CHECKLIST** 

**During the meeting:** 

on the issues.

as well.

Follow-up:

the issues.

TALK TO THE MEDIA

across.

**Contacting media** 

petition supporting you.

the politician to reconsider.

COMMUNICATE WITH GOVERNMENT

Use Twitter (not during working hours) to tweet about

On-line petitions/e-mails to MPPs and others are all inexpensive, fast and effective ways to communicate/

 You need to be clear about your agenda – why you're there, what it is that you want done to resolve your issue. You should have materials on hand to detail how the issue affects the people who elected this politician. Be able to identify who your supporters are (other unions, your community) and how your issue affects them.

Present the facts, your position and request follow-up.

Listen as well as speak. Ask the politician his/her position

community for RNs and their issues. Have your supporters follow up with phone calls, letters and visits to the politician

Ask for the politician's support and a promise to discuss the issue with members of caucus, or to ask a question in the legislature about the issue. Perhaps they would make a public statement supporting your position or forward a

1 It's good form to send a follow-up thank-you letter. Use this letter to again reiterate your issue, your position and desired action. If the politician made any promises to you during the meeting, indicate this in the letter; if they did not, again, ask

2 Following your meeting, report back to your co-workers and allies, and encourage them to contact the politician about

3 Monitor the politician's performance and public statements and if they don't follow through with promises, contact them

again to remind them of their promise.

Don't get side-tracked and stick to your issues.

Engaging the media can be a powerful way to get out your messages and influence the community and decision-makers. Developing relationships with your local media can be as easy as: **Pre-contact CHECKLIST** 

O Before any contact with the media, develop a set of "key messages" – the top three or four points you want to get

O Summarize your key messages in as succinct a way as possible – use bullet points (i.e., "cuts hurt patient care").

O Remember, no matter what the issue, the media and the community are interested in the local impact on them. Try to phrase your points from the patient's viewpoint.

O Designate a spokesperson and ensure they are available before contacting the media. Ensure the spokesperson is

clarification. If you don't know the answer, simply say so. Nothing is ever off the record – EVERYTHING you say In order to avoid libel, never target individuals. Again, be truthful but don't assign blame to an individual. Only make