

INSTRUCTION SHEET B.C. NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE ZONE CAMPAIGN

How to lobby local governments to support the petition to make B.C. a nuclear weapons free zone

The goal of this campaign is to convince the provincial government to declare the entire province a nuclear weapons free zone. The strategy is to create pressure on provincial politicians by getting as many individual municipal governments as possible to sign the enclosed nuclear weapons free zone petition. To do this, peace groups will have to lobby their civic governments to support the petition. Timing is crucial: councils will probably be much more inclined to listen to lobby groups just prior to or shortly after the civic elections in mid-November. The following instructions are to assist you in working out a successful lobbying strategy.

Step One: The Initial Meeting. As soon as possible, call a meeting of your local peace group and supporters. You will know best the supporting groups in your community, but they usually include church, school, labour unions or councils, professional, environmental and women's service groups. Try to get as broad a cross-section of people involved as possible.

To organize a good turn out, send a letter and telephone. Speaking to someone directly seems to get the best results. Although some groups will need to hold their own meeting before they can decide to endorse the campaign, they should be encouraged to send an observer to your meeting, so that they will be able to report accurately on what you are doing.

At the meeting, describe the purpose of the campaign and come up with a plan of action for exactly how best to approach your Council. *To be most effective, strike subcommittees with specific responsibilities.* Some suggested subcommittees are:

1. an *information committee* to compile convincing material to be submitted to council—and to the public—about why this issue is important
2. a *media committee* to arrange coverage prior to and at the Council meeting
3. a *community support committee* to get more sectors of the public to support the idea of making B.C. a nuclear weapons free zone
4. a *speakers committee* to work out which speakers should address the Council meeting, in what order, etc.

At this point, try to delegate the responsibilities as much as possible, so that one person isn't doing too much of the work. Make sure that the subcommittees have a clear idea of what they should accomplish between this first meeting and the next one.

Step Two: Getting on the Agenda. Find out when Council meets and how to get your request on the agenda. In some areas, you may only need to make a phone call to get on the agenda. Usually though, you will need to send in a letter. Find out to whom it should be addressed, as it varies with different councils. (For example, some will only deal with a request if it is addressed to "The Mayor and Council.")

Step Three: The Letter or Brief. Send a letter to the Mayor and to each member of Council explaining who your organization represents, what you wish Council to do, and why it is important for them to do it. You may wish to write a brief as well, which explains the importance of your initiative, and why peace is a civic matter, etc., in more detail. The booklet *Cities and Disarmament* answers many of the questions City Councillors might ask. Try to consider the reactions of individual Council members when deciding whether to send alot of material or a simple letter. *When you send your letter, include the list of areas in B.C. that have declared*

themselves nuclear weapons free zones, as this will help to bring home to Council members how large a movement this has become in B.C.

Step Four: Lobbying Individual Councillors. Find out who the people are on Council, what their interests are in the community, and who in your peace support group knows them or knows someone who does. On the basis of this information, decide who to send to lobby each Council member. It's a good idea to meet first with Councillors who are sympathetic with peace issues. Leave each Councillor with written information which explains the concept and importance of the B.C. NWFZ campaign, and leave a petition with each of them.

Step Five: The Motion. Draft a proposed motion, or use the sample motion we've included in this package. If a particular Councillor is particularly sympathetic, you might ask them to draft the motion with you. Then get commitments, before the Council meeting, from two Councillors to move and second the motion. Try to get other Councillors to commit themselves to supporting the motion. That way you will know who will be on your side, and who will need more lobbying.

Step Six: The Media. Start contacting the media as soon as possible. Call the local media--radio, T.V. and newspapers. Get a spokesperson on an open-line show if you can, or arrange an appearance on local T.V. You might consider having your local station show one of the excellent documentary films done by the peace movement, and then afterwards discuss the nuclear weapons free zone for B.C. campaign. Many of these films are 20 or 25 minutes, so they fit perfectly into a half hour on cable T.V., leaving a few minutes for discussion. It may also be possible to show the film in one half hour, and then have a panel discussion in the second. Encourage the local media to cover the Council meeting when the request will be voted on. Send them press releases, and copies of the petition, as well as information about your organization and the number of nuclear weapons free zones in B.C.

Step Seven: Community Support. If you can demonstrate strong community support for the campaign, then Council members will be much more likely to vote to sign the petition. Get prominent individuals, organizations, and ordinary citizens to write letters to Council asking them to support making B.C. a nuclear weapons free zone.

Step Eight: The Council Meeting. Talk it up in your community, and try to get as many people as you can to the Council meeting on the night you speak to Council. Arrange to have a broad range of organizations and individuals appear before Council as delegations to speak in support of your motion. Each group could present a different reason for why B.C. should be a nuclear weapons free zone, and why civic governments should support the petition. Whoever coordinates the speakers should brief each of them to make sure that they put forward a clear argument, and to make sure that the different speakers build on each other's statements and don't just repeat what has been said before. Each presenter should speak for only 5 to 10 minutes.

Step Nine: Afterwards. All copies of the signed petition should be sent to:

Vancouver Special Council Committee on Peace
Vancouver City Hall
453 W. 12th Ave, Vancouver, V5Y 1V4

We will coordinate responses and introduce the petition to the House at the earliest possible date.

Good luck! If you have any questions, or if we can give you any further information or help, call the End the Arms Race office at 736-2366, and we will be pleased to help out.