Organizing a **phone tree**

Phone trees are a great way to spread the word quickly. No-one has to make more than a few phone calls, and you're usually calling someone you know – or will get to know over time. Phone trees make communicating easy for big and small locals.

Your canvass network, based on the 1-in-10 communicators model, has many of the building blocks of a good phone tree – contact information, people communicating with each other, and a good workplace map. Canvassers have a great opportunity to gather phone numbers, and recruit volunteers to help work the phone tree. Canvassers will find the phone tree useful as one form of follow-up and ongoing contact with the people they've signed up to CUPE's health care campaign.

Here are some phone tree tips and a sample phone tree template, adapted from *Communicating CUPE*:

First, you need a membership list with telephone numbers – at work and home if possible, with notes about which number the member prefers to be called at. Your canvass will build this list. Choose one person who will maintain an up-to-date version of this list, and will trouble-shoot any broken links.

Then, you need an organizational chart or map of the membership, which the canvass will also help develop. A thorough knowledge of the various locations, workplaces and shifts is essential to organizing an effective contact system.

From this point, you can recruit your list of callers. Start with your canvassers. It's great for them to develop an ongoing relationship with the group of workers they're going to be keeping in touch with. You can also look to executive members, stewards, committee members and other known activists. Divide the membership among the number of reliable callers you have recruited.

You should bring the callers together to help in setting up the network. Their job is to recruit contacts in the various work areas, and to maintain ongoing contact.

Follow the same logic you've used for the canvass. For example, it's often useful to have people call people they work with. Group members together who speak the same language, and connect them with callers who speak their language. Ensure your callers are a diverse group.

Try to avoid giving too many calls to any person, and avoid more than two or three levels of contact. This will prevent breakdowns and limit the chance that a message gets confused.

Provide a script that includes basic information – a meeting or rally date, as well as some background and a contact for more details.

When possible, build in a back-up system. Ideas include designating 'backups' who can take over the calling if needed, ensuring that at least two different people are called within each work area, and having initial callers at the end of the list as well, so they can make sure the message got out.

Follow-up is critical to the maintenance of an effective phone tree. Callers should report broken 'links' immediately, so that the phone tree coordinator can track down a new phone number or contact information.

Test the tree before it's put into operation. Have the phone tree coordinator double-check the numbers of key contacts, and as many local contacts as possible.

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Telephone Tree

Organizing Committee	**Key Contacts**	**Local Contacts**

A. _____

    a. _____

        1. _____
        2. _____
        3. _____
        4. _____

    b. _____

        5. _____
        6. _____
        7. _____
        8. _____

    c. _____

        9. _____
        10. _____
        11. _____
        12

    d. _____

        13. _____
        14. _____
        15. _____
        16. _____

B. _____

    a. _____

        1. _____
        2. _____
        3. _____
        4. _____

    b. _____

        5. _____
        6. _____
        7. _____
        8. _____

    c. _____

        9. _____
        10. _____
        11. _____
        12

    d. _____

        13. _____
        14. _____
        15. _____
        16. _____