



WE DECIDE

Green New Deal Communities
Organizing Guide

 **THE COUNCIL
OF CANADIANS**
PEOPLE. PLANET. DEMOCRACY.

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Organizing Guide

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Acknowledgements

This organizing guide has been influenced and inspired by many organizations and movements. It is our hope that this guide reflects and amplifies those movements and helps to bring even more groups together to build a Green New Deal from the ground up.

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WHO DECIDES?

Who decides what our climate future will be? Will it be the defenders of the status quo who have caused the interconnected economic, climate, health, and water crises we're facing? Or will it be people and communities?

The answer is simple: We must decide.

Diverse social movements — including Black, Indigenous, and all People of Colour, migrants, workers, women, and beyond — are already shaping the future of Canada.

Together, we can build a Green New Deal from the ground up. Will you join us?

Green New Deal Communities form a network of community-based campaigns across Canada rooted in the principles of the Green New Deal. Together, we are learning, making tangible change in our communities, and reclaiming political power for people and the planet.

Municipalities have control over activities that account for nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. Municipalities can also apply upward pressure for climate justice on the provincial, territorial, and federal governments. Community organizing can have a decisive impact on local climate justice policies and plans. This means the more local Green New Deals we can build, the closer we are to a safe climate future.

The Council of Canadians provides direct support for campaigns led by local organizers and movements. We connect communities in different places to learn and develop strategies together and tell the story of our Green New Deal to broader movements and audiences. We're taking a growing Green New Deal to politicians across the country and holding them accountable to the changes we know we need for a healthy future that includes all of us. We hope you'll join us.

What is a Green New Deal?

A Green New Deal is a transformational project that recognizes the urgency of our interlocking crises — including the climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing colonization, economic inequality, racism, unjust treatment of migrants, and other ways that our society makes people vulnerable — and the scale of change necessary to tackle them. It is more than a policy — it is an idea for massive societal transformation that has sparked movements around the world.

The world’s scientists and Indigenous Peoples are telling us that we have to change course — and we need to do it quickly. We have to cut our global greenhouse gas emissions by at least 60 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 if we are going to have a livable planet in the future.

Pledges from governments and Big Oil to reach “net zero emissions by 2050” sound good on the surface but leave a lot of room for interpretation. “Net zero” can be used as a cover for false “solutions” like carbon capture and storage. We need real and substantial emissions reductions in this decade.

A Green New Deal for all will ensure that transformation is carried out equitably, that it is rooted in climate justice principles, that it centres the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that it creates over a million jobs in the process.



Members of Parliament in the U.K. have been meeting since 2007 to build a Green New Deal. There’s a growing movement for a European Green New Deal and the 2019 elections in Spain were won by the Spanish Socialist Party, which ran on a Green New Deal Platform. The South Korean government launched a national Green New Deal in July 2020 to respond to the pandemic and the climate crisis. There has been a recent surge in movement organizing and support for a federal Green New Deal in the U.S. in the last few years. Recently, some international organizers have begun calling for a global Green New Deal. An international coalition of big city mayors is calling for a global Green New Deal to be driven by municipalities. More than 10 municipalities in the U.S., U.K., and Canada have already begun implementing local Green New Deals. There is also growing momentum in several countries for Green New Deals at the provincial, state, or territorial levels.

Photo by Markus Spiske from Pexels

In Canada, the Green New Deal continues to gain traction. In 2019, more than 150 communities hosted town halls to talk about what they wanted to see in a Green New Deal. MP Peter Julian tabled a parliamentary motion in early 2020 calling for federal support for a Green New Deal. In November 2020, Vancouver adopted a Climate Emergency Action Plan, which contains many elements of a local Green New Deal, including climate policies that address equity, inequality, Indigenous rights, anti-racism, transit and transportation, food, land use, expanding the urban tree canopy and local ecosystems, housing, and reducing natural gas use in buildings.



Photo by Pascal Bernardon on Unsplash

At the Council of Canadians, we want a Green New Deal that:

- Is a Just Transition, divesting from polluting projects and creating jobs in clean-up, renewable energy production, efficiency, and beyond
- Invests in public infrastructure and services
- Centres Indigenous self-determination
- Ensures that social justice, equity, and human rights are a central part of climate action
- Opposes hate and systemic racism
- Defends and expands democracy
- Is paid for by tax fairness
- Prioritizes public health

We take responsibility for real change.

No one else will do this for us. For decades we've been told that only outside experts can solve the climate crisis. But this has only delayed action and kept power in the hands of a polluting and inequitable status quo. By choosing to act in local communities around tangible goals, we're taking responsibility for our community's needs — together.

We start with our own communities.

A Green New Deal led by communities who are connected across distance will address local needs while also building the political power we need to make aggressive shifts in national climate policy. Communities know the local changes they need, and by connecting local movements across distance we're identifying common goals that we can leverage for national change.

We won't be divided.

Community movements across the globe are ready and willing to change to avert the worst of the climate crisis. When we fight together for the things we need, that's when we win. By supporting local political power, Green New Deal communities are building the alternatives we need while deepening the strength of our democracies. The structures of racism, colonialism, sexism, ableism, and more have divided us for too long. Building a Green New Deal means addressing oppressions directly, so that we can meet these challenges together.

61%

In April 2019, [61 per cent of people in Canada supported a Green New Deal](#) — and as many as 66 per cent said they would back the idea if it's paid for by increasing taxes on “corporations and the wealthy.” Tackling the climate and inequality crises must go hand in hand.

73%

[Abacus polling indicates](#) that the majority of people in Canada support continued and expanded climate action in the COVID-19 recovery period. [Another poll by EKOS](#) shows that 73 per cent of people in Canada want a transformative just recovery in response to the pandemic.

The Council of Canadians is supporting Green New Deal Communities in this work by:

- **Supporting new local organizing:** helping local leaders develop effective campaigns and build support locally to carry out a campaign, often rooted in Council of Canadians chapters and members across the country.
- **Supporting existing local movements:** providing strategic campaign support, storytelling across distance about effective alternatives and how to make them a reality, and connecting movements to one another.
- **Leveraging networks of movements to realize national change:** connecting movements to one another to identify common alternatives across distance, calling together for systemic changes from all levels of government, and connecting local organizing to institutional support that engages communities and civil society in the power-building work necessary for large-scale transformation.

Why join Green New Deal Communities?

We work to support local campaigns in multiple locations and make connections so that we can build the Green New Deal together. Through this work we can make tangible change on the ground and organize and inspire communities for bigger wins in the future.

If you have already developed, or want to develop, a locally rooted campaign relating to any issues under the banner of the Green New Deal, including but not limited to:

- Emissions targets
- Shutting down or blocking fossil fuel extraction, exploration, and transportation
- Decent work and worker transition to low-carbon jobs
- Education
- Indigenous rights, title, and sovereignty
- Equity, migrant justice, and anti-racism
- Policing
- Forestry, mining, or other extractive industry
- Affordable green public housing
- Ending corporate capture of development
- Transit and transportation
- Drinking water and wastewater
- Food sovereignty, agroecology, and reforestation
- Revenue generation to pay for transition
- Another justice issue your community is facing

... we encourage you to get in touch with us to join the network of Green New Deal Communities campaigns! Here are the types of support we can offer when you join this network:

Support for local campaigns

We support local campaigns working towards Green New Deal-inspired change. The Council provides resources to community organizers, supports capacity-building for campaign teams, and promotes local campaign activities. The wisdom and energy to develop a locally relevant campaign lives in your community. These campaigns must be carried out by community members, led by those directly impacted by the root causes of the climate crisis. The Council of Canadians works with you to find ways for us to add power to your campaign while your community maintains control over strategy and goals.

This support might include strategic development, communications and messaging support, outreach and engagement, or other needs identified by your campaign team.

Connection to other Green New Deal Communities

How do different local issues connect to the concept of a Green New Deal? We answer that question by connecting local campaigns and organizers together. The Council of Canadians is building a network of community-rooted campaigns so local organizers can learn together, get support with the challenges of local organizing from people who are doing that work, and draw connections between different campaigns.

Making the Green New Deal a reality

Together, we are sharing stories of tangible, local change taking place across the country. These connections can motivate more action in communities across the country and create ripples of support and action throughout our movements. They can also help build a broad base of support for provincial or federal Green New Deals.

We invite you to become part of the GNDC Project if you or your group:

- Are working on a locally focused Green New Deal-inspired campaign currently, or trying to set a campaign strategy in motion; and
- Share our vision of what a Green New Deal can be ([see page 5](#)).



Here's how we make change:

If you're an individual looking to build local organizing:

- Step 1: Contact us [using this form](#).
- Step 2: Let's talk. We'll get in touch with you to discuss what you want for your community and how it connects to the Green New Deal.
- Step 3: Connect with other GND Communities. Join a bi-monthly meeting for Green New Deal Communities organizers who are getting started on building powerful campaigns.
- Step 4: We work together. Our organizers can support you as you identify needs and opportunities in your community, build a team of local campaigners, set a campaign goal, and develop a campaign plan to get there.

If you represent a local coalition or group already organizing:

- Step 1: Contact us [using this form](#) to let us know where you are and what you're working towards.
- Step 2: Let's talk. We'll get in touch with you to learn more about your ongoing work, find ways to offer direct support, and connect you with others.
- Step 3: We work together. Our campaigners and organizers can offer support to your campaigns, connect organizers together across communities through occasional meetings and discussions, and help tell the broader story of the change we're building together.

If you're part of a regional or national organization looking to connect:

- Step 1: Contact us [using this form](#) to let us know where you are and what you're interested in.
- Step 2: We'll get back to you to talk more about how we might work together!

The appendices to this guide include worksheets and group activities to help you create your campaign strategy together, or to reflect on and refine the strategy you already have. Please feel free to use the attached strategizing resources and contact us for support in using these tools.

What has this looked like so far?



Blue Communities — the Blue Communities Project is a long-standing effort to ensure municipal governments recognize the human right to water and sanitation, protect public water utilities from privatization, and ban the sale of bottled water. Eighty local communities across Canada and the world have become Blue Communities, always starting with a small group of dedicated people who want to protect access to clean, safe, public water for their community. We have worked with groups in rural areas, small towns, large cities, universities, and churches to create Blue Communities. The latest Blue Community is Otterburn Park in Quebec, which committed to protecting water in November 2020!

Local governments and the decisions they make have a direct impact on residents' lives and access to services, community, and sustainable living. Municipalities directly own and operate, as well as oversee the development and maintenance of, the majority of local infrastructure and public services. These services include electricity, transportation (public transit, cycling, and pedestrian infrastructure), affordable housing and buildings, child care, education, drinking water and wastewater, arts and entertainment, decent work and fair wages, cultural and recreational centres, snow and waste management, accessibility, food security, public spaces, health, and social services. They can also play a key role in rejecting new fossil fuel infrastructure.



Photo by Jp Valery on Unsplash

Corporations undermine local democratic decision-making in many ways. One key strategy corporations and governments use, which undermines action to address climate and economic crises, is Public Private Partnerships (P3s). A P3 is a form of privatization involving multi-decade contracts between a public body and a private entity, usually arranging financing for public infrastructure and services. P3s tend to cost the public a huge amount of money while taking away community control and public oversight on public infrastructure like roads, water treatment, and transit. Despite the growing need for reinvestment in local infrastructure, Canadian municipalities are chronically underfunded. Now, the federal government's COVID-19 recovery strategy is to use the Canada Infrastructure Bank to lend only to municipalities and provinces that agree to privatizing public infrastructure. Forcing P3s onto municipalities would make it more difficult for communities to set their own Green New Deal priorities and should be opposed. [Read more about P3s at canadians.org.](https://canadians.org)

Becoming a Green New Deal Community is also the next natural step for communities that have declared a climate emergency, which hundreds of municipalities from coast-to-coast-to-coast and around the world have now done.

Now that the recognition of the urgency of the climate crisis is widespread, it's time to take the next step.

Appendices

1. [List of suggested resolutions](#)

These sample Green New Deal municipal resolutions have been curated by the Council of Canadians. The resolutions are influenced and inspired by many organizations and movements. It is our hope that they reflect and amplify those movements and help to bring even more groups together to build a Green New Deal from the ground up.

2. [Campaign strategy toolkit](#)

In order to have a successful campaign for tangible change, organizers must first choose a strategic goal. The Council of Canadians has pulled together a set of tools and activities that can help your group through the campaign planning process and support you in developing a strategy to achieve your goal. This kit includes tools on understanding strategy, community scans, goal-setting, power-mapping, spectrum of allies, choosing tactics, and campaign evaluation.

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