

The Council of Canadians: National Organization and Local Chapters

The Council of Canadians is a progressive political non-partisan (issue based) citizen's organization that has social activist chapters in 55 cities in Canada. The Council of Canadians believes that political literacy is crucial to regaining and keeping control of our communities and our country. We believe that environmental and social justice are inseparable. The organization's official name, "The Council of Canadians, Acting for Social Justice", includes Environmental Justice as a type of social justice. We reserve the democratic right to criticize any sitting government at any level in Canada, no matter which political party is in power.

A minimal staff of paid researchers and campaigners in Ottawa assists local chapters on the following issues:

1. Trade
2. Water
3. Health Care
4. Energy and Climate
5. Democracy

Local chapters determine which campaigns align with which local issues in their communities and work to educate and motivate for change.

Our London chapter is presently working on the following issues:

1. Peace and Human Rights

- Welcoming immigrants and refugees to Canada
- Fighting for Canadian federal government recognition of Palestinian rights
- Fighting for women's rights
- Fighting for fair and decent wages and against precarious work, in solidarity with unions
- Fighting for a publicly funded Canada Post and against efforts to privatize it; and for postal banking as a part of Canada Post
- Fighting in support of war resisters
- Fighting for Canadian sovereignty over its own governance, legal system and security, and to prevent deep integration of them with the United States
- Fighting for an end to war and sales of weapons (and other war materials) by Canadian corporations to other countries; in particular, an end to sales of these by London, Ontario corporations to other countries

2. Trade Justice

- (currently on hold pending a new committee chair)
- Fighting against "free" trade agreements such as NAFTA, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and CETA
- Fighting for fair trade in general

3. Health Care

- Fighting for full public funding for hospitals
- Fighting to prevent the privatization of publicly funded hospitals and medical clinics
- Fighting for a fully publicly funded Pharmacare program for Canada
- In general, fighting to preserve the socialized health care we already have in Canada

4. Food Security

- (currently on hold pending a new committee chair)
- Fighting to prevent the use of bee-killing pesticides, fungicides and herbicides
- Fighting for backyard beekeeping and chickens
- Fighting for sustainable carbon farming in support of passive climate change mitigation

5. Water

- Working toward winning a “Blue Community” designation for the City of London, Ontario
- Carrying our Giant Blue Water Serpent puppet in marches in support of water rights and water justice

- Fighting for environmental protection for the **Thames River** and its watershed, including prevention of the establishment of land fill sites situated near ground water sources and rivers and creeks
- Fighting to prevent the privatization of our water supply (to keep it in public hands)
- Fighting to ban bottled water and to prevent unscrupulous bottled water companies like Nestlé from exploiting community drinking water sources
- Fighting for the banning of rail cars carrying hazardous chemicals through densely populated areas and across rivers (not just a water issue, of course)

6. First Nations: Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples

- Fighting for environmental justice for First Nations, including those in the London and Sarnia areas
- Fighting for the right to clean water for First Nations
- Fighting for the right of First Nations to refuse to allow building of tar sands pipelines through their lands and to demand the removal of existing pipelines on their lands
- Fighting for full criminal investigation of each and every murdered and missing Indigenous woman and girl
- Fighting for Truth and Reconciliation, and for full compensation for the lasting effects of the residential school system and accompanying “60s Scoop”

7. Energy and Climate Justice

- Fighting for complete elimination of the mining and refining of the tar sands and the elimination of the pipelines and rail cars that transport the resulting diluted bitumen produced
- Fighting for replacement of fossil fuels of all kinds by sustainable energy choices
- Carrying our Giant Black Pipeline Snake puppet in marches in support of the elimination of all tar sands pipelines
- Fighting for a publicly funded electric power system and against efforts to privatize it
- Fighting for the right of the animals of the earth (including human animals) to a stable and clean environment (only possible without fossil fuels)
- Fighting against offshore drilling for oil by companies like BP (which has already spilled off the coast of Nova Scotia)

8. Democracy

- Fighting for Proportional Representation in elections at all levels of government in Canada
- Fighting for fair elections in general
- Fighting against unfair practices such as robocalling and gerrymandering

We believe that diversity and inclusiveness generate grassroots creative actions which grow true community and that money should never prevent anyone from supporting the Council of Canadians, which is why one can join for as little as \$10. Leadership on the Steering Committee is open to everyone, and anyone who wants to sit in and listen can come to any of our Steering Committee meetings. Our monthly events, planned by the Steering Committee, are open to all interested people.

Our local chapter draws people with a variety of interests. What we all have in common is a desire to make our community, this country, and the world more stable for the generations coming. It's wonderful to be in a room of like-minded people who care as much as you do. The London chapter has volunteers skillful in a variety of things, and we try to lead with our strengths and interests; for example, we have community members who like to paint props, write press releases, sew banners, public speak, and more. What do you like to do? What skills will you lend to protect the environment and human rights?

Roberta and Robert Cory, and Jennifer Chesnut