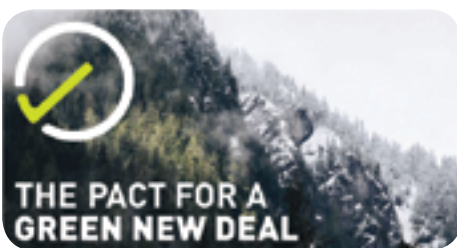




The Council of Canadians chapter members in Terrace, B.C. take part in the Global Climate strike in September

Moving Toward Climate Justice and a Green New Deal

By Robin Tress and Dylan Penner



In October 2018, the International Panel on Climate Change issued a wakeup call, releasing a report that says we have until 2030 to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent, toward net zero by 2050. Scientists from around the globe were clear about the urgent need to act quickly.

This past spring, the Council of Canadians helped launch the Pact for a Green New Deal and put the call for climate crisis solutions front and centre in the federal election.

We are also taking action to support and amplify the growing wave of youth-led climate strikes that are sweeping the globe, with nearly 1 million people of all ages in Canada – and 7 million around the world – taking part in September’s

strike. Council of Canadians chapters, staff, board members and supporters took part in many of the strikes from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

Federal election

Canada just had its first climate election, and we turned up the heat on federal candidates and parties to support a Green New Deal.

We supplied Council supporters and chapters with organizing tools to “grill the parties not the planet.” We produced an election Organizing Toolkit to help get out the vote for a Green New Deal and a Voter’s Guide for Council chapters and supporters to use in their community to encourage people to vote.

We prepared window signs and questions for candidates. We supported

Council of Canadians chapters that organized election events, including candidates debates on the climate crisis. We also provided real-time commentary on the leaders' debate on social media.

In October, 17.9 million people went to the polls. Sixty-three per cent of Canadians voted for parties with significant climate planks in their platform. Polling indicates the Conservative Party paid a price at the ballot box for not having a climate plan, a direct result of the work the Council of Canadians and our many allies did to change to political narrative before and during the election campaign.

Keep it in the ground

This past August, on the shores of the Unist'ot'en Camp, we tasted the pristine deep turquoise waters of the Wedzin Kwah River for the first time. We were there to visit with frontline Wet'suwet'en land water protectors, including those on Unist'ot'en, Gidimt'en and Likhts'amisyu clan territories. The people in these camps are defending their lands, culture, and water from the Coastal GasLink Pipeline, owned by TC Energy (formerly TransCanada).

The trip was a remarkable experience that will continue to influence our climate justice work in solidarity with land and water defenders.

With pipeline fights heating up, this was an important moment for us to reconnect and build deeper relationships with frontline communities, Indigenous peoples, and other climate justice allies. We also met with allies fighting the Trans Mountain Pipeline in Vancouver.

This critical trip to build these important relationships wouldn't have been possible without Council of Canadians supporters. And with your ongoing support, we hope to continue this kind of deeper relationship building with frontline communities in 2020.

Building offshore resistance

We are playing an important role in challenging offshore drilling, through our South Shore chapter's Campaign to Protect Offshore Nova Scotia (CPONS).

People from coast-to-coast-to-coast have added their support with 66,000 people signing our petition to the federal government calling for a moratorium on offshore oil and gas exploration until a full, independent public inquiry has been completed.

As a result of our community-focused campaign with CPONS, 12 municipalities in Nova Scotia have also joined the call for an inquiry.

This November, we brought U.S. municipal representatives who are challenging offshore drilling in their communities to Nova Scotia to share their stories and help build momentum for a public inquiry.

Corporate capture and criminalization

The Council of Canadians has escalated efforts to raise awareness of the deepening corporate influence in democratic institutions and processes, which is putting the interests of Big Oil ahead of people and the planet.

We are challenging the increasing criminalization of Indigenous land and water defenders, who are on the front lines defending their culture and environment, as well as protecting the climate for all of us.

We issued action alerts challenging this criminalization and the double standard that lets fossil fuel corporations like Coastal Gas Link and Alton Gas break the law with impunity. Indigenous struggles for sovereignty are an integral part of climate action, and our solidarity with Indigenous peoples is crucial for building a better world.

The Pact for a Green New Deal

A Green New Deal will provide a rapid, inclusive and far-reaching just transition to slash greenhouse gas emissions, meet the demands of the multiple crises we face, respect the rights of Indigenous peoples, and create over 1 million jobs in the process.

Working with coalitions and allies, including the Green Economy Network, the Climate Action Network, the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group and others, the Pact for a Green New Deal will provide a just transition

to a post-carbon world that leaves no one behind.

More than 100 organizations support a Green New Deal, and nearly 200 communities hosted town halls across the country to talk about it. So far, more than 50,000 people have pledged support for climate justice and a Green New Deal.

An update on what was shared at the town halls is available at GreenNewDealCanada.ca. Now that the federal election is over we're excited to get back to work in this coalition and to continue developing what a Green New Deal would mean for Canada.

Building Green New Deals for our communities

The push for a Green New Deal is also happening at a local level, focusing on transformative change in our municipalities. A few months ago, the Council launched the Green New Deal Communities Organizing Guide to help people encourage their municipal representatives to commit to the changes needed for a Green New Deal.

Already several communities are getting on board, and other communities are stepping forward to take on this work over the coming year. If you're interested in building a Green New Deal for your community we would love to hear from you! Email greennewdeal@canadians.org for details.

What's next?

Decisions at various levels on key fossil fuel extraction projects are expected in the coming months, including the Coastal GasLink and TransMountain pipelines, as well as the massive Teck tar sands mine.

Right here, right now, and in the coming weeks and months, we can decide our future with a Green New Deal. And we can win it by turning up the heat on our Members of Parliament and reminding them of the climate action and progressive values people supported in the recent federal election.

Dylan Penner and Robin Tress are climate and social justice campaigners with the Council of Canadians.