

Local Kitchen Table Conversation Facilitation Guide

Building our movements
so **The Many can defeat
the Money**

INTRODUCTION

Across Canada, the crises we face are multiplying, from devastating floods and fires to a soaring cost of living and a crumbling health care system. While our communities bear the brunt of these issues, Canada's billionaires have pocketed an extra \$78 billion in the last five years – extracting wealth and resources away from our communities.

Meanwhile, Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives are using our pain to rise in the polls, fanning the flames of division while they serve the corporate class. If Canadians vote as present polls predict they will, Pierre Poilievre will be Canada's next Prime Minister, and the Conservatives could wind up with the largest parliamentary majority in Canadian history.

But this doesn't have to be our future.

We need to sound the alarm now. We need to build a movement resisting the terrible assaults that we would face under Poilievre. We need to come together with allies to debate and define what a bold, popular alternative vision of Canada would be, and organize to win it.

We need to speak to our friends, neighbours, and community members about the dangers of a Poilievre government. Right-wing politics relies on divided communities to win. They're betting that we won't reach out to one another, understand and share our burdens, and organize together to ensure our politicians enact policies that work for all of us. Right now, they're specifically targeting migrants and trans people, and they won't stop there. Building trust and relationships within our communities is a direct affront to the right-wing tactic of dividing us and is essential for building the power to win real gains. And it's essential work in the fight to resist the ongoing social crises roiling Canada and those who are responsible.

This work starts with coming together to unpack the compounding crises we are facing, understand their root causes, and discuss the path forward. As people who are deeply concerned about the threat a Poilievre government would pose for the cost of living, climate action, public health care, and democracy, we must first get aligned on our political analysis and the work ahead.

This facilitation guide provides you with everything you need to get started on that journey: bringing the choir together and practice our harmonies, before we go out and sing to the congregation, or the public. We must build a movement strong enough to change the political climate, whoever is in office, and that work begins right here in your kitchen, one conversation at a time.

WHAT IS A KITCHEN TABLE CONVERSATION?

A **kitchen table conversation (KTC)** is an informal gathering where people come together in a home or other comfortable venue to discuss an issue that matters to them. If it sounds simple, that's because it is!

It does not have to take place at a kitchen table, but it is important that these conversations are in an informal, relaxed setting, often with food or refreshments. A cozy and warm setting invites people to bring their whole self, their lived experience, genuine emotions, compassion, and curiosity to the conversation.

Effective political organizing begins with relationships. Joining together with members of your community to discuss our political moment is a great way to get to know new people and establish a solid foundation for ongoing collaboration. A sense of personal connection and belonging is often the key factor that motivates people to commit to ongoing activism.

BEFORE THE KTC

A kitchen table conversation is easy to organize, but there are a few details to keep in mind. In addition to hosting your event in a comfortable and accessible location, provide some snacks and refreshments, or make it a potluck. It's also important to be prepared with a facilitation plan for your conversation and ensure that you're clear about what you'd like the gathering to accomplish.

We're envisioning three main goals for these conversations:

1. *Get to know people in your community who are concerned about the worsening crises of our political moment and are interested in taking action*
2. *Discuss the issues together and arrive at a shared political analysis*
3. *Build local capacity for ongoing activism to resist the corporate-conservative agenda in the lead-up to the federal election and beyond*

Below is an outline of what you'll need to do as you prepare to host a kitchen table conversation.

Task	Details
Contact the Council of Canadians	<p>Register your event using this link to let us know you're planning to organize a kitchen table conversation. We'll be keeping track of each gathering and mapping our movement across the country and support you with your event.</p>
Get a team together	<p>We recommend that you find one other person in your community to help you organize your kitchen table conversation (though this isn't strictly necessary). It's helpful to have someone to share the responsibilities with, particularly when it comes to managing logistics like snacks and beverages on the day of the event.</p> <p>Your KTC partner could be a fellow activist but doesn't have to be – it could be a friend, family member, or other person in your life who is interested in supporting you.</p> <p>Having trouble finding someone to organize with? Council of Canadians staff may be able to put you in touch with someone in your community.</p>

Task	Details
Pick a date, time & place	<p>We suggest that you plan for a two-hour event, though your group may want to adjust the length of your KTC as needed. Evenings and weekends are usually the best options for most people. The location should be comfortable, accessible and welcoming, and ideally available for little or no cost. This could include a private home, a shared building common area, a library, a restaurant/pub/brewery, or even a public park if the weather's nice and you'd like to meet outside.</p> <p>If you have kids or are inviting people with kids, consider creating a space for the little ones to spend some time colouring or playing with toys. Perhaps their parents can bring their favourites if you don't have any. Have a place where kids can share in the refreshments, too.</p>
Invitations	<p>First, take a moment to map out who you might want to invite. It's a good idea to invite people you already have some connection to, whether as friends, colleagues, community members or fellow activists. You might want to reach out to organizations with similar values, including environmental organizations, faith groups, and local First Nations.</p> <p>It's easy to overlook an invitation in a crowded inbox, so plan to send your invitation message more than once. Follow up directly with individuals who you'd really like to have present at your KTC. A brief phone call, in person chat, or personal email exchange can make all the difference when you're inviting people to a new initiative. Council of Canadians staff can also assist you by sending an email invitation to our list of local supporters. See the sample invitation below this table.</p> <p>Aim for no more than 7 attendees to keep the logistics simple, and to make sure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to speak and get to know one another. You may need to send out an invitation to a significant number of people before you get 7 confirmed attendees. At the end of the day, the people who show up are the right people for the conversation, and you can grow your group from there.</p> <p>If you get more interest than this, keep that list handy in case you want to host again, or a participant at your KTC wants to host!</p>

Task	Details
<p>Make a plan for refreshments</p>	<p>Having some food and drinks available is a great way to ensure a smooth and enjoyable meeting. The Council of Canadians is offering up to \$75 for KTC organizers to purchase snacks, refreshments and other supplies. Please be aware that we cannot reimburse you for purchases of alcohol. Contact manysmoney@canadians.org for reimbursement details, and in the meantime please hold on to any receipts.</p>
<p>Prepare materials for the conversation</p>	<p>Before you meet, don't forget to print out your facilitation guide and any other relevant documents you need for the conversation.</p> <p>Make sure you have some pens, clipboards, scrap paper and dishes needed for serving food and drinks. If you need to purchase supplies, we can cover the costs up to a total of \$75.</p>

SAMPLE INVITATION TO YOUR LOCAL KTC

Dear [friend],

[introduce self as needed, how you got their contact info.]

We find ourselves in a wild political moment, with the convergence of multiple crises (including health care, housing, cost of living, climate) and heightened rhetoric from right-wing elites and politicians like Trump and Poilievre. I am personally feeling frustrated and disempowered, and am finding myself disengaging, which is counter-intuitive and not actually what this moment requires.

If you're feeling this way too, you're not alone. And if you're not, I'm happy for you! Either way, I'd love for you to come to my home [date, time] for some food and conversation with a few others to chat about what's happening and why, and to start to feel some more power or control over things.

Let me know if this timing works for you! And if you're interested but can't make it this time, let me know too and I'll reconnect about the next thing soon.

Hope to see you [date, time, address as needed],
[name]

STRUCTURE OF THE KTC

We have put together a facilitation guide, including key questions, main goal of each section, and other notes, to help you guide your group through the discussion.

Section	Goal	Facilitator script	Facilitation notes
Mingling	Allow time for people to gather, get settled with a snack, etc.	We're going to get started in a few minutes, if you want to get a snack and find a place to sit.	This is a good place to engage any children present in the full gathering and introduce them to any toys/colouring books you have ready for them.
Introduction (15 mins)	Allow participants to get to know one another.	Thank you everyone for joining. Please introduce yourself, including your name, pronouns, and home community. What brought you here this evening?	Even if someone answers that they came because someone (you) invited them, ask them why they decided to say yes.

STRUCTURE OF THE KTC: CONTINUED

Section	Goal	Facilitator script	Facilitation notes
Host opener (15 mins)	Provide some initial framing and share the structure of the gathering.	<p>Across Canada the crises we face are multiplying, from devastating floods and fires to a soaring cost of living and a crumbling health care system. Politically, the election of Trump south of the border, the recent resignation of Trudeau, and the rising popularity of Pierre Poilievre present a lot of uncertainty.</p> <p>We hope this gathering can provide a space for processing and making sense of this political moment, connect with others in our community, and figure out a path forward.</p>	<p>Explain that the Council of Canadians has prepared some brief framing materials to summarize the political moment. This is a starting point for the conversation to follow—everyone doesn't need to agree!</p> <p>As the host you don't need to read the whole thing. You can ask people who are there to share in reading aloud.</p>
Reflection and discussion (30 mins)	<p>Provide space for people to reflect after the introduction, and have discussion that process the major points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poilievre and the Conservative rise to power by capturing the sentiment about the failure of the current system. • This current moment has deeper roots in the decades-long corporate control over our lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did any of that resonates with you? • What questions does that reading raise for you? • How do we explain the rise in popularity of Poilievre and the Conservatives? • What are Poilievre and the Conservatives' explanations for the current crises? What are they proposing as the solutions? • How would you explain the current crises? What are your solutions to them? 	<p>You don't need to have the answer to people's questions. Instead invite others in the group to chime in with their thoughts/answers. This part could flow easily into talking about personal experience with these issues, or you may need to ask deliberate questions about people's person experience.</p>

STRUCTURE OF THE KTC: CONTINUED

Section	Goal	Facilitator script	Facilitation notes
<p>Personal experience (20 mins)</p>	<p>Encourage participants to connect the larger political context with their personal experience, and avoid going too deep into sharing facts about the issues. Sharing personal experience also builds trust. This will be more successful if you as the host model it for others.</p>	<p>What are the issues that feel most pressing to you, your loved ones, and the people in your community?</p> <p>Follow-up questions to shift people away from sharing facts, and focus instead on lived experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this issue make you feel? • What does this issue tangibly mean for people in your community? • Who is causing it? • Who else is impacted? <p>If people don't identify themselves as affected by today's crises, ask about which communities and groups are.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we know people who are directly affected by these issues? Or organizations that represent them? • How might we offer solidarity to directly affected people and communities? 	<p>It might be beneficial for you (the host) to share your personal experience first, to get things started. You can also ask follow-up questions to a participant if they have touched on an issue in their introduction.</p> <p>The purpose of asking this is to help the group identify if they are advocating for themselves, or are in a position of working in solidarity with directly affected people.</p> <p>This part of the conversation may be sensitive for some people. Do ask open ended questions as described here, and remind people to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable with. Don't pry about personal details of people's lives and struggles.</p>

STRUCTURE OF THE KTC: CONTINUED

Section	Goal	Facilitator script	Facilitation notes
<p>Orienting to solutions (15 mins)</p>	<p>Pivot to discussion on what we can do, history of social movement and the victories won through people power.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have we fought corporate power before? How did we win? • Examples of movement victories. • What do we have to do to popularize our explanations/solutions? <p>Examples in case you need get the conversation started:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National pharmacare act! Won by the Council of Canadians and a huge swath of allied organizations • Maternity leave! Won by striking postal workers • Any local examples you can think of 	<p>It might be handy to prepare a local, recent example of a victory won through community organizing and people power.</p> <p>Pull people back when they veer towards a single, silver-bullet solution (“if we could just vote for the NDP/get electoral reform/get media attention,” ...) and invite people to dig deeper into why we haven’t achieved that yet.</p>
<p>Planning for action (15 mins)</p>	<p>Turn to discussing what this group of people would like to do.</p>	<p>Now that we have discussed and got on the same page about this political moment, the work ahead is to build a strong social movement that can confront the corporate agenda in the street and at the ballot box.</p> <p>What is this group motivated to do during the federal election and beyond?</p> <p>Some options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come together again and dig deeper into any of the questions we discussed, or didn't discuss today • Host another kitchen table conversation with new people. Can you think of 5-7 people you would want to invite? Would anyone here like to partner up and host that conversation? • Go to an upcoming action/event planned by an ally to deepen our understanding of the issues and bring in people who need to be part of this discussion. • Go out for a listening canvass, using the Council of Canadians materials, to better understand people’s concerns and reality and identify points of commonalities. 	

AFTER THE KTC

- Finally, send a follow-up email the next day to thank your participants, put everyone in contact and review next steps. Congratulations—you've hosted a kitchen table conversation!
- We've included a sample follow-up email below. Make sure a link to the [feedback form](#) is included.
- Fill out the feedback form yourself.
- Depending on what next steps the group has decided, plan for the next gathering/action.

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP EMAIL AFTER YOUR KTC

Dear [friend],

[introduce self as needed, how you got their contact info.]

It was great to see you at our kitchen table gathering yesterday. There are so few venues for genuine democratic discussion these days, and it feels so important to get together with like-minded people to talk about this political moment.

As we talked about yesterday, this kitchen table conversation is a first step in a longer process that's happening across the country. In communities like ours, people are coming together to build a movement capable of resisting the conservative-corporate agenda represented by leaders like Poilievre and Trump.

[include any specific next steps that your group decided to take]

Please don't forget to [fill out this feedback form](#) to share your experience at yesterday's meeting with the Council.

In solidarity,
[name]

SHORT DISCUSSION SCRIPT FOR OPENING

If Canadians vote as polls predict they will, Pierre Poilievre will be Canada's next Prime Minister, and the Conservatives could wind up with the largest parliamentary majority in Canadian history.

So far Poilievre hasn't offered detailed plans for what his government would do aside from catchy three-word slogans and an anti-woke attitude. But Poilievre's track record as an MP fits the usual Conservative pattern: championing policies that grow corporate power and profits at the expense of social programs, workers' rights, environmental protection and public services. With right-wing politicians around the world emboldened by Trump, we can expect even more of those policies if Poilievre forms government.

Why is Poilievre so popular? Part of the explanation is that people are looking for something new after ten years of Trudeau. But Poilievre's rise is also part of a global trend of right-wing politicians presenting themselves as anti-establishment champions of ordinary people fighting against a corrupt establishment.

One reason that message has been successful is that the parties of the political centre, including the centre left, have run out of ideas. Unwilling to offer serious solutions to the crises we face, from climate change to the soaring cost of living to deep challenges in our health care and education systems, politicians of the political centre are losing voters' confidence. Progressive voters are disillusioned and many are staying home.

People are looking for genuine political alternatives. As long as the parties of the centre continue to uphold the broken status quo, career politicians like Poilievre can present themselves as

"outsiders" — even when they pass laws that enrich CEOs and billionaires at the expense of ordinary people.

If we want to challenge the rise of Poilievre, we need to build a movement that can demand real solutions to the crises we face. We need a real progressive alternative to Poilievre's phony populism and the lukewarm policies of the political centre.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO GET THERE

A Poilievre majority is not inevitable, but we can't sit back and wait for a politician to come along and save us. We need to get organized and go out into our communities to sound the alarm now about the dangers of a Poilievre government. At the same time, we need to think beyond election day. No matter who forms the next federal government, the best hope we have for real solutions to the crises we face is large numbers of organized people demanding an end to corporate control of our lives.

In this moment, people are hungry for a "political home," a place where people can gather to get to know each other, make sense of the current situation, and take action collectively. The Council wants to be that political home for people in communities across the country, and the first step is hosting conversations like this one.

.....➔ Identify local allies and build local alliances

We need to speak to our friends, neighbours and community members not only about the dangers of a Poilievre government, but about the kind of Canada we can build together. But first, we need to listen carefully and empathetically to their thoughts about the ongoing social crises roiling Canada, and who is responsible for these problems. Building trust and relationship within our communities is a direct affront to the right-wing tactic of dividing us, and is essential for building the power to win real gains.

We need to reach out to local organizations that share our concerns and feel threatened by the ever-spreading corporate agenda and the prospect of a Conservative majority headed by a hardened ideologue like Poilievre.

.....➔ Contest the corporate agenda

We must expose the corporate agenda dominating Canadian politics, and any politician that serves it. The corporate media, understaffed and hollowed out by greedy American private equity firms and tax-dodging tech giants, has done a woefully inadequate job of putting Poilievre on the spot and forcing him to say more than just his pat, 3-word slogans.

We can expose the corporate agenda playing out in our politics on many fronts: in mainstream and independent media, in social media, in our organizations, through creative public action, in candidates' debates and other electoral events, and in conversation with friends, family, and neighbours.

In order to deepen equity and investments across our communities, we have to defeat the corporate agenda in the ballot box – federally, provincially,

now, and in the future. To do that, we must first defeat it in the streets.

The Council of Canadians invites you to attend or host a Kitchen Table Conversation, either online or in person in your community, to get disciplined in our organizing and win gains towards the future we want.