

How to start up a Chapter of the Council of Canadians in your community!



1 800 387 7177 www.canadians.org



Council of Canadians chapters from across the country march in Edmonton to protest the expansion of tar sands development in northern Alberta.

Since its inception, the Council of Canadians has built its strength and credibility with powerful grassroots activists in communities across Canada. Chapters are truly our greatest asset. Members of the Council of Canadians who organize into chapters work tirelessly, with abounding energy and achieve success at the community, provincial and national level – building the kind of Canada WE want!

Our volunteer Chapter activists work with local community groups, organized labour, and our members and staff to promote progressive policies on fair trade, clean water, energy security, public health care and others issues of social and economic concern to Canadians. We defend public services and work to secure the right to water both in Canada and internationally.

Chapters form for a variety of reasons. There is no “correct” way for a chapter to form but, there are some steps we need you to go through in the process. In the Council of Canadians’ regional offices both the Regional Organizer and the Administrative Assistant are here to assist you at every step in the process of establishing a Chapter. As a Chapter, you will work closely with the regional office, so now is a good time to establish your working relationship.

Without a doubt, the Council of Canadians simply couldn't be as effective as we are without the volunteer energy and dedication of our 70 grassroots chapters that span the country. They are the beating heart of the Council's activist base, taking on issues of local concern, building momentum for our national campaigns, and bringing positive change to communities across Canada.

*–Maude Barlow
National Chairperson
Council of Canadians*

Being part of a chapter is important to me because it gives me resources from the national and regional offices which informs me on various important social justice issues. It brings information and impact to the local community which it would not receive otherwise.

*–Jim Riesberry
chapter activist
Brockville ON*





STEP ONE

Contact the regional office of the Council of Canadians and have a chat about the idea of starting a Chapter in your community.



STEP TWO

Gather a group of five people, all new or current members of the Council of Canadians, who agree to be founding members of the Chapter and are committed to the goals of the Council of Canadians. (New members can join on-line at the www.canadians.org, or with the membership forms we will provide.)



STEP THREE

Sign the Chapter Start Up form. The five people will have to complete the form and submit it to the regional office.



STEP FOUR

Organize a Founding Meeting for your Chapter.

Decide on a date that works for your five members and does not conflict with other events in your community. Make sure that this date works for the Regional Organizer, as she/he will attend. You can hold it at someone's house, or in a local community space. Publicize the founding meeting at local community centres and in your local papers, etc. You might even consider putting out a press release for your community paper – they might make it a story! The regional office can help you with this.

Inviting the Regional Organizer to your Chapter's founding meeting is a great idea because she/he can talk about the Council of Canadians, the activities in your region, how chapters work and work together, etc. The Regional Organizer can also go over some of the nuts and bolts of chapter logistics and structure. At this meeting you'll need to establish some roles for members of the chapter – most importantly who is going to be the contact person for us to work most closely with.

MANDATE OF A CHAPTER

The Council of Canadians' Chapters shall, in addition to carrying out Council campaigns

- Operate in a manner consistent with the participatory, democratic aims of the Council of Canadians as reflected in the Statement of Purpose and Guiding Values and Principles.
- Keep the regional offices of the Council informed of their activities on a regular basis.
- Engage with the community in local issues that reflect the values and principles of the Council and reflect the objectives of the national campaign strategy.
- Encourage broad participation in Council campaigns by Council members and the public through regular public meetings and events.
- Work to establish a presence in the community such that the Council is seen as taking a cooperative leadership role in the broader movement for social justice and democracy.



STEP FIVE

Hold the meeting!

You'll receive your official Chapter Handbook, Council of Canadians' banner and information materials at this meeting once the Chapter Agreement Form and the Chapter Contact Waiver Form are signed.

Here is the list of the forms that the Regional Organizer will bring to the meeting and will need to be completed.

- **Chapter Agreement Form** – really the most important form to establish that you agree to work with the Council of Canadians.
- **Chapter Contact Waiver Form** – allows us to publish the name, email and telephone number of the chapter's contact person.
- **Council of Canadians' Membership forms** – anyone wanting to become a member can use this form.
- **Chapter List Serve Registration** – allows us to add members of the chapter to the list serve and communicate with the chapter.
- **Chapter Bank/Credit Union Account Start-up Form.**

The first three Forms are to be completed at the Founding Meeting and given to the Regional Organizer (or sent to the office if they are unable to attend). It is important to note that the Chapter cannot set up their bank account until the National Office has received the first three forms from the regional office. The Chapter List Serve Form and the Chapter Bank/Credit Form can be sent to the Regional Office at a later date as applicable.

Once you confirm to the Regional Office that you have opened the credit union account, we will issue you a one-time "Chapter start-up" contribution. This amount is to get you up and running and able to start your own fundraising. Start by collecting memberships from other people in your community – for each membership you collect, the National Office will send you just over 110 per cent of the first year of that person's membership contribution.

Additionally, your Chapter is entitled to further financial support for additional costs that you might incur. The Chapter Handbook will provide you with more information.

We hope that provides you with enough information to get started. We look forward to working with you!

DEFINITION OF A CHAPTER

Chapters of the Council of Canadians work to realize the mandate of the national organization in their communities. A chapter is defined as: at least five (5) *members in good standing of the Council of Canadians who work together, on a regular basis and in a democratic manner, to participate in Council campaign initiatives, local coalition building and social justice politics. A Chapter is comprised of activist members of the Council who attend chapter meetings on a regular basis. A Chapter is not considered to be comprised of the entire Council membership in a given region.

*Member in Good Standing

A member in good standing is defined as a member who has donated \$6 or more at least thirty (30) days prior to, and no more than 12 months prior to the AGM business meeting.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL CHAPTERS

- Knowledge of the chapter handbook.
- At least five active members who share the responsibility for the Chapter in a democratic, participatory manner.
- A reliable contact person, with an e-mail address, who will share information received with members of the chapter. This person must consent to have their name, phone number and chapter email address published on the Council of Canadians website and in our membership publication Canadian Perspectives.
- A chapter bank/credit union account; with a designated treasurer and cheque signers who are members of the Council of Canadians and do not live in the same household.
- Regular meetings that are open to people who wish to become active in the chapter.
- Adherence to the Council's Statement of Purpose and Guiding Values and Principles.
- Submission of the Annual Chapter Report by June 30th each year and the Annual Chapter Financial Report by August 15th of each year. Failure to do so will suspend the ability for the chapter to attend the Annual General Meeting.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAPTER AND THEIR MEMBERS:

CHAPTERS AND EACH OF THEIR MEMBERS SHALL:

- Ensure that commitments made, materials, correspondence or articles written or produced in the name of the Chapter be approved by the Chapter as a whole or by an appointed/elected steering committee and that the Chapter is clearly identified on all paperwork, announcements, correspondence, etc;
- Take responsibility for ensuring that any public speaking or media events with which the Chapter is involved convey information that is accurate and in keeping with the Council's campaigns, Statement of Purpose and Guiding Values and Principles and let the Regional Organizer know about it;
- Encourage participation of Council members in the chapter's work;
- Strive to have a presence in the community through media work, event planning, and participation in community activities;
- Get in touch with your Regional Organizer if your Chapter wants to work on local issues not directly related to the Council's National Campaigns. A decision can then be made about how much support COC can offer.
- Agree that no individual member of the Chapter will receive any personal remuneration for work done in the name of the Council or the Chapter unless otherwise authorized in writing by the national organization. Contact your Regional Organizer for clarification.
- Develop and adhere to defined processes for the operation of the chapter that encourage and facilitate the participation of local Council members and result in the sharing of responsibility for work to be done;
- Keep a written record of proceedings at all chapter meetings. Keep them on record in a designated location and report annually to the regional office no later than June 30 each year. Failure to do so will suspend the ability for the chapter to attend the Annual General Meeting.

IN ADDITION, CHAPTERS COLLECTIVELY SHALL:

- Hold a credit union or bank account that is named in the format: "CoC-Chapter name", (eg: CoC-Red Deer Chapter). This name shall be used on any official documents signed by the Chapter Contact including bank forms, venue or equipment rental, etc.;
- Ensure there are two signing officers who are members of the Council of Canadians and do not live in the same household for Chapter cheques to be issued from the chapter account;
- Responsibly understand the protocol for requesting chapter funding and follow the procedures for reimbursement;
- Agree that no government money, foundation money, political party, corporate or small business donations shall be solicited or accepted for use by the Chapter;
- Keep a close accounting of financial transactions undertaken for group activities;
- Stamp the "return" portion of membership brochures with the name of the Chapter in the designated box so that new memberships can be remitted to the Chapter twice yearly – at the end of January and the end of July;
- Retain copies of Chapter bank and credit union account statements and submit them along with the Annual Chapter Report no later than August 15 each year. Failure to do so will suspend the ability for the chapter to attend the Annual General Meeting.

