

Final
Basis of Unity of Off the Defensive¹

Debated, amended and voted upon at the Off the Defensive Conference on August 31, 2025.

1. The Objective Situation and Overcoming Present Limitations

People's struggles in neighbourhoods and other geographical communities across Canada have been multiplying, developing and advancing in recent years as the crises of capitalism worsen conditions for the masses. From skyrocketing housing costs to the destruction and evacuation of whole communities due to intensifying forest fire seasons, the people are being faced with more and more reasons to fight back. It is a positive development that over the past few years local people's struggles have emerged in proletarian and popular neighbourhoods that did not exist a decade ago. But until now virtually all of these local struggles have, at most, only been able to confront local manifestations of our class enemies and the capitalist system—and any gains or concessions they've made have actually been quite limited. The greatest gains have been the organization of people and the spread of class consciousness and working-class struggle. But the critical limitation of these local struggles, which many of us have been a part of, is that they've lacked a strategic unity, aspiration, capability or direction beyond strictly immediate and local goals. We call this limitation *localism* and the people's struggles will not be able to tilt the scales in the overall class struggle in their favour while being limited by localist horizons. We, founding members of Off the Defensive (OTD), pledge to forge OTD as an instrument for overcoming localism and creating a strategic unity for working-class and people's struggles in neighbourhoods, including but not limited to tenant struggles, as well as other geographical communities across Canada.

2. Advancing Local Struggles and Building Real Bases of People's Power Through Neighbourhood Committees and Assemblies

The purpose of this strategic unity is to greatly broaden, elevate and advance the present state of people's struggles in our neighbourhoods and geographical communities. We intend to do this by not only continuing to build these struggles but by also breaking these struggles out of narrow, sectoral thinking and toward the development of longer-lasting organs of people's power. We aim to see the neighbourhoods we organize in become bastions of worker and people's power with their own popular authority, creating a form of organization and mobilization that outlasts the ups and downs of any specific, single-issue campaign or struggle. We plan to do this by orienting all local struggles we engage with into the construction of Neighbourhood Committees and Neighbourhood or People's Assemblies that survive those struggles and become wider mobilizations and organizations of the masses that can build a new popular authority through and beyond the passing struggles. Some, or many, of these Neighbourhood Assemblies or Committees may be led or initiated by members of OTD, but these will be wider mass organizations specific to the geographical communities in question. It is important to note that we are not asking that existing local struggles and organizations be dissolved. This organization means to provide strategic direction to local struggles that previously have met dead ends and provide a wider regional and cross-country perspective. This organization is also positioned to give local organizers access to a pool of resources to expand their work. This includes access to more organizers, propaganda materials, political education and training materials, and logistical support.

¹ The French-language name of the organization has been designated *Offensive populaire*.

3. Our Strategic Horizon is Socialism

The strategic horizon of Off the Defensive will be socialism. There is no shortage of reformist organizations out there or organizations that speak of “socialism” but cannot tell you how they plan to achieve it. We want to take this strategic question seriously. “Socialism” will not be a word we dangle to attract new activists while doing the opposite in practice by trying to make capitalism just a little less painful. We mandate OTD to immediately place on its agenda how neighbourhood organizing and related kinds of geographical organizing contribute to the struggle for working-class power and socialism, and to develop these conceptions into its future program and strategy. We intend for OTD to eventually be able to give a decisive, revolutionary answer to the housing crisis and the many other crises plaguing our communities. Part of this answer must also include how neighbourhood and other geographical people’s struggles, and OTD specifically, can build their alliances with and struggle for unity around a real program for socialism with other sectors of people’s struggles, especially but not only workers’ struggles. We mandate the Organizing Committee (OC) of OTD to work this into a draft program and strategy in preparation for a Founding Assembly of OTD in 2026.

4. Definition of Membership

We constitute OTD as an individual-membership form of organization. That we will not be a coalition will already be an important step in overcoming localism. Coalitions tend to see their constituent organizations push their own organizational agendas instead of all those constituents struggling and unifying around the highest outcome for the whole or the collective—in this case, the needs of the organization and the needs of the overall class struggle. While local conditions and work should inform our strategy and tactics in OTD, members of OTD should be strategizing for the chapters based on what will advance the class struggle in each region most firmly and soundly.

Each individual member must uphold the Basis of Unity of OTD, build up and actively participate in the organizational life of one of its chapters, pay a \$25 New Member’s Fee (to be collected with the launch of chapters) and operate under the leadership elected and structure adopted at the August 31, 2025 Off the Defensive (OTD) Conference. Every member has full rights to vote, elect and be elected to positions within OTD immediately upon joining it. Every member has a right to give and receive criticisms and self-criticisms to other members, including those in the OC. Members will be permitted and even encouraged to continue their memberships and activities in existing local formations that are entirely independent and distinct from OTD, especially those with greater mass character that play a distinct and broader function from what OTD will be.

5. Leadership Structure

Elections for the interim OC of OTD held at the Off the Defensive Conference on August 31, 2025 will see participants nominate and elect a leadership that can lead and cohere the new membership of OTD across all existing or potential organizing bases that the new membership has ties to. The Organizing Committee should not be so large that it is unwieldy nor so small that it is ineffective and unable to carry out its responsibilities. We propose 5 OC members as the appropriate size to achieve this task at this point in time. The OC will effectively lead and coordinate OTD until and into its Founding Assembly later in 2026. We give the Organizing Committee the mandate to further elect members to it, or remove members, as it sees fit, by a majority vote.

6. Definition of Chapters, Organizational Structure and Membership

The new organization will be led by the OC but the bulk of the membership will be situated in local chapters. Immediately following the OTD Conference, the OC will meet to determine the number and composition of the

organization's chapters. The OC is mandated to launch the chapters by December 2025. Chapters will be based on geographical regions that are accessible to all members in that geographical region. Each chapter will have a Chapter Executive that will be elected by the chapter members at the chapter's "general membership meeting" (GMM). The Chapter Executive should minimally consist of a secretary, a political education and training lead, a propaganda lead, and a treasurer. The executive size and further roles can be determined by local chapters. OC members will be tasked with facilitating the first chapter GMM in each regional chapter and will run the election of the Chapter Executive for each region. Each chapter must have at least one, if not more, neighbourhoods in their scope of work.

Until the Founding Assembly in 2026, the OC will draft all proposals and plans concerning the organization's direction, will consult Chapter Executives on these plans and proposals, and will put all plans and proposals to a vote at chapter GMMs. Chapter Executives should also be consulting with the members in their chapter GMMs to get feedback on the OC's plans and proposals. This consultation process will allow for Chapter Executives to *inform* plans and proposals and the general membership to deliberate and vote on them. A plan or proposal will be considered adopted if a majority of the organization's membership across the entire organization votes to adopt it, and rejected if the majority of members reject it.

7. Outline of Mandate for the Organizing Committee

We mandate the work of the new Organizing Committee to encompass:

- a. Launching social media and/or some kind of online presence that announces OTD's emergence and begins to put out its propaganda so that its existence can be known and popularized across and beyond existing networks;
- b. Creating and unifying a political education and organizer training curriculum for its members, associated organizers and other activists among the masses in the neighbourhood organizations that we presently have ties to, while ensuring that every section of the organization receives training and education with this curriculum within a reasonable span of time;
- c. Recruiting and expanding the membership base of OTD and consolidating this membership into chapters that are oriented toward class struggles in neighbourhoods or geographical communities and toward the construction of Neighbourhood Committees and Assemblies;
- d. Developing the infrastructure to support, advise and train members involved in local struggles;
- e. Developing the strategic direction and program for the organization, including a clear identification of the class enemies the new organization will fight against, to be debated, amended and finally adopted at the Founding Assembly in 2026;
- f. Preparing the Founding Assembly in 2026;
- g. Drafting a constitution and any other necessary organizational documents necessary for the Founding Assembly in 2026; and finally,
- h. Developing an organizational plan, budget and fundraising plan within the first three months of the OC's existence, all due before the end of December 2025, that spell out how OTD can achieve its goals with the resources at its disposal or with the resources that it can further raise. These plans should include a date for the Founding Assembly, the political plan to get us there and to make advances on the priorities specified above and bring forward a fundraising proposal that considers and selects the most

appropriate means among the different fundraising options out there (monthly dues, fundraising drives and/or events that raise funds and/or solicit one-time donations). The overall plan and budget should be developed in consultation with local groupings or chapters of members. The overall political plan, budget and fundraising proposal should be adopted before the end of 2025 and should cover all necessary activity leading into the Founding Assembly in 2026. A financial report will be presented back to the organization at its Founding Assembly in 2026.