



BLUE DOT ORGANIZER TOOLKIT

Thank you for joining the Blue Dot movement! You are now part of a groundswell of committed people who believe that, no matter who you are or where you live, you deserve the right to breathe fresh air, drink clean water, eat safe food and have a say in the decisions that affect your health and well-being.

Our goal is simple: to have all levels of the Canadian government recognize, protect and fulfill every person's right to live in a healthy environment. **And it all starts with you.** This toolkit features tips, tools and resources to support you in achieving a municipal declaration on the right to a healthy environment for your community. Read on for more information about what this means, why it matters and the necessary steps you'll need to take to make it happen in your community.

» **Your first step** is to take some time to get familiar with environmental rights, the Blue Dot movement and the concept of a municipal declaration. You can start by watching the webinars and reading the information below.

WATCH THE WEBINARS:

- » [David Boyd on environmental rights](#)
- » [Telephone town hall with David Suzuki](#)

BLUE DOT KEY MESSAGES

- More than 110 nations recognize their citizens' right to live in a healthy environment. But not Canada.
- The right to a healthy environment is the simple yet powerful idea that all Canadians deserve to breathe fresh air, drink clean water, eat safe food and enjoy a stable climate.
- The Blue Dot movement is about protecting the people and places we love.
- I support the Blue Dot movement because I believe that every person in Canada deserves a future that is healthier and more secure. With people from all walks of life coming together, we can make it happen.
- This is our moment to stand together and regain Canada's status as a leader in environmental protection - our health, and the health of our environment, can't wait.

FIGURES AND STATISTICS

- One in two Canadians live in areas where they are exposed to unsafe levels of air pollution.
- Canada has no national safety regulations for drinking water or binding air quality standards.
- Pollution costs Canada more than \$100 billion a year.
- About 85 per cent of people in Canada support the right to a healthy environment.
- More than 110 nations recognize their citizens' right to live in a healthy environment. In over 80 per cent of these countries, these rights have already led to stronger environmental laws and improved protection.

WHY A MUNICIPAL DECLARATION?

- Declarations are commitments by municipalities to address local environmental concerns.

- A municipal declaration is a commitment to principles that will protect, fulfill and promote your right to a healthy environment.
- Local government action is a critical milestone on the road to provincial and federal environmental rights and ultimately recognition in Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Read » [Municipal declaration frequently asked questions](#)

PHASE 2: STORYTELLING AND CANVASSING

» Stories have the power to convey learning, engage individuals and compel action. Telling stories that motivate people to take action is key to getting others to join the movement and getting politicians to listen.

» Begin broadening your Blue Dot volunteer group to build the people power necessary to achieve a municipal declaration and strengthen the movement.

START WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

- Get three to five friends to take the Blue Dot pledge: <http://bluedot.ca/join-us/>
- Screen [Today Is the Day We Decide](#) (David Suzuki) or [Shoulders](#) (Shayne Koyczan).
- Have a conversation about environmental rights and practice your storytelling by asking others to join your Blue Dot team. Read [“Talking from the heart: How to facilitate real conversations about environmental rights”](#) for more information.
- Make sure you watch this [Storytelling and Canvassing webinar](#), hosted by Blue Dot organizer Cameron Esler.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Like the [Blue Dot movement Facebook page](#) and join the conversation on environmental rights. Then set up a Facebook **group** for your community to encourage Blue Dot supporters to connect online. You can share information from our Blue Dot movement page, provide updates, ask questions and spread the word!

- Check out [this example](#) from Kelowna Blue Dot.
- Don’t forget to read the [Blue Dot online communications guidelines](#) for tips on online engagement.

Use any of these images for your Facebook group:

- [Blue Dot Logo](#)
- [Facebook profile 1](#)
- [Facebook profile 2](#)

STORYTELLING

In a few paragraphs, practice writing your own story about environmental rights.

- What are the key moments of your life that have led you to create change in your community? (Note: This is a personal, emotional story, not a biography.)
- Why is achieving environmental rights important to you and your community?
- End your story with an action that leads to a solution (e.g., “Join me, and let’s work together to pass a declaration of environmental rights in our community.”)

COLLECTING PLEDGES

The first step in standing up for environmental rights is signing the [Blue Dot pledge](#). You can build local power and momentum by collecting pledges. That’s because the bigger our community, the greater our impact will be!

SAMPLE CANVASSING SCRIPT

INTRO: Hi! My name is _____. I’m a volunteer with the Blue Dot movement. May I speak with you for a minute about the importance of environmental rights in our community?

EXPLAIN: The Blue Dot movement is a national grassroots campaign based on the idea that everyone in Canada deserves the right to fresh air, clean water and safe food. As Canadians, we don’t have these rights. We want to show our elected representatives that our community is ready to be a leader on environmental rights to protect the people and places we love. Do you think it’s something you can support?

SIGNATURE ASK: Will you sign our petition calling on our municipality to recognize its citizens’ rights to a healthy environment?

EMAIL ASK: Would you like to receive email from the David Suzuki Foundation’s Blue Dot movement?

VOLUNTEER ASK: Will you volunteer and join others in our community who want a safe and healthy environment?

CANVASSING:

- Download [the pledge](#) and [enter the names you collect via our offline pledge form](#) afterwards. (Note: See the canvassing webinar above for information on data entry.)
- Download and print Blue Dot handbills in [black and white](#) or [colour](#) to hand out when canvassing and a [banner](#) for tabling, if applicable.
- Don’t forget to practice first with friends and family.
- Take a friend out canvassing. We suggest visiting a Farmers Market or community event.

After you’ve tried some canvassing and submitted pledge names to the [online form](#), get in touch with us. Find your local organizer contact info at the end of this toolkit.

CONNECTING WITH OTHER VOLUNTEERS:

- Send a message to your local organizer (see contact info at the end of this toolkit) to let us know you're ready to be the lead Blue Dot volunteer in your area. We'll send an email to volunteers in your area telling them to get in touch with you.
- Organize meetings and start finding roles for people (e.g., canvasser, data entry, event coordinator, etc.).

HOLDING AN ORGANIZING MEETING:

- Find a venue (try a library or community centre).
- Start with an [icebreaker activity](#), which will give people a chance to relax and get to know each other.
- Provide resources. Give a brief presentation on environmental rights, or hand out the [municipal declaration FAQ](#); let people know where they can watch webinars and find more information.
- Assess skills and find appropriate roles for people: How much time can people commit? What skills can they contribute (graphic design, writing, government relations, public speaking, networking)?
- [Set goals](#) — number of signatures, number of volunteers, dates for going to council.
- Get canvassing — partner up and decide which community events you will canvass.
- Plan regular meet-ups.

PHASE 4: BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Now your Blue Dot group can reach out to others in your community.

REACHING OUT TO OTHER AUDIENCES:

- Write op-eds and letters to editors ([check out these tips](#)).
- Connect with other groups in your region (social justice, environmental, health, clean technology, natural foods and products, etc.).
- Get local stakeholders, like city councillors, on board.
- Identify what issues and messages will work best for getting citizens and councillors in your community to support environmental rights.

PHASE 5: GOING TO COUNCIL

So you've collected enough signatures and you think it's time to take them to council? **Talk to us!** We can provide tools for taking the municipal declaration of environmental rights to your local council.

EMAIL US FOR:

- A model municipal declaration.
- A PowerPoint to help you present to council.
- A brief on environmental rights to provide your councillors.

- Answers to your questions regarding engagement with councillors.
- Resources to help volunteers and council shape a declaration that's a fit for your community.

GETTING AN AUDIENCE WITH COUNCIL:

- Identify a councillor who you think might champion the declaration and schedule a meeting with her or him.
- Schedule a "deputation to council." (Visit your municipal website to see what the process is in your region.)
- Prepare a brief (three- to five-minute) presentation to give at council.
- Encourage your community to call or [write](#) city councillors expressing support for the declaration.
- Pack city hall with supporters (dressed in blue!) on the day you or your supportive councillor is presenting.

10 KEY PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS:

1. Do your homework. Before contacting councilors, try to find out more about them. You may even find that there is an obvious ally on council who may be willing to help you out!
2. It's about relationships. When you contact councillors, take a deep breath, be yourself and don't forget to ask them how they are doing.
3. Congratulate councillors for programs or initiatives they have undertaken that are in line with the Blue Dot movement (see, that homework came in handy!).
4. Show that you're confident. After all, you're "fighting the good fight". Try a "[power pose](#)" on your own, or as a group exercise before presenting to council. This will get you and your team "in the zone"!
5. Focus on solutions. Pitch the declaration as an opportunity for council to show leadership and for council to stand with citizens in a support of a healthy environment.
6. Be responsive over email and phone. Follow up if you don't hear back. Be polite but persistent.
7. Get representation right. Try to have a diversity of voices represented in your presentation to council. A mix in age, ethnicity, experience, etc. will lead to a more powerful discussion. We've found that youth voices are very compelling for decision makers!
8. Don't let the perfect stand in the way of the good. While it's important to prepare, speaking from the heart is the best way to motivate others.
9. Celebrate your success! You've made a huge impact on the conversation about environmental rights whether your council passes a declaration or not.
10. Recharge and get back in touch with us to find out how you can be involved in the next phase of the Blue Dot movement!

Please take a moment to appreciate your hard work! **And if you haven't already, please contact us so we can support you during the next steps!**

PHASE 6: CELEBRATE AND GET IN TOUCH

We'd love to hear from you! Contact us and let us know what you're doing in your community. We're here to answer any questions and to provide guidance on your municipal declaration.

YOUR BLUE DOT ORGANIZING TEAM:

- municipal@bluedot.ca
- trainer@bluedot.ca
- montreal@bluedot.ca

Appendix 1:

Municipal declaration of environmental rights – FAQs

What are environmental rights?

Just as Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees us freedom of expression and protects us from discrimination, environmental rights ensure that our laws and policies protect the basic elements of our survival, such as clean air and water, safe food and unpolluted land. Over the past 50 years, the right to a healthy environment has gained recognition faster than any other human right. Today, Canada is among a minority of countries that does not yet recognize the right to a healthy environment.

Is the environment a municipal issue?

Municipal governments make decisions that affect transportation, housing density, waste disposal and other issues related to the quality of the environment. Local governments also have the power to pass bylaws to protect residents from environmental harm. The Municipality of Hudson, Quebec, passed a bylaw to restrict the use of pesticides. Since then, communities across Canada have considered passing pesticide restrictions to their residents' health.

What is a municipal declaration of environmental rights?

A municipal declaration of environmental rights is a commitment to decision-making principles that protect, fulfill and promote the right to a healthy environment. A community's specific declaration might include a commitment to use the best and latest available science to ensure that the right to a healthy environment is always considered when decisions are made. A declaration can also include a commitment to set clear environmental objectives and targets for air pollution or other issues of relevance to the community. Finally, a declaration can ensure municipalities remain accountable through regular assessment and public reporting.

Will municipal declarations support environmental rights for all Canadians?

Social change begins in our own backyards. As a groundswell of communities call upon their local governments to pass environmental rights declarations, provincial and federal decision makers will take notice. As momentum builds and Canadians call on all levels of government for change, provincial and federal officials will enact legislation that protects our right to air, water and food, and ultimately enshrine the right to a healthy environment in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

How can I support a declaration in my community?

People from coast to coast to coast are already leading grassroots campaigns to urge their local communities to make environmental rights declarations. To find out how you can get involved, visit bluedot.ca/join-us.

Appendix 2:

What are environmental rights?

Over the past 50 years, the right to a healthy environment has gained recognition faster than any other human right. The right to a healthy environment includes breathing clean air, drinking clean water, consuming safe food, accessing nature and knowing about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment.

Evidence shows that countries with environmental rights and responsibilities in their constitutions:

- Have smaller per capita ecological footprints;
- Rank higher on environmental performance measured by a suite of 15 indicators;
- Are more likely to have ratified international environmental agreements; and
- Have been more successful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

More than half of the world's nations recognize their citizens' right to a healthy environment. Canada is among a minority of countries that does not yet recognize this right. **Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not explicitly protect or even address environmental rights.** Just as the Charter guarantees us freedom of expression and protects us from discrimination, environmental rights would ensure that our laws and policies protect the basic elements of our survival, such as clean air, safe water and unpolluted land.

If you're interested in learning more about Environmental Rights, please read:

- [Ecojustice primer on right to healthy environment](#)
- [David Boyd's white papers on right to healthy environment](#)

Appendix 3:

More on the Blue Dot movement

The Blue Dot movement is a comprehensive, multi-year campaign to support the groundswell of Canadians who want meaningful action to protect the people and places they love.

We have a plan to create lasting change for generations. Here's how:

Across the country, Canadians believe in our inherent right to a healthy environment – clean air and water, safe food and a say in decisions that affect our health and wellbeing. One by one, people like you stand up to say this right should be recognized.

This growing movement of Canadians calls upon their local communities to pass municipal declarations respecting people's right to live in a healthy environment.

Community by community, this grassroots movement inspires decision-makers across our provinces and territories to take notice. With so many communities calling for action from all levels of government, the next step is to have our provincial and federal governments follow suit and pass environmental bills of rights.

Recognition in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – the highest law in our country – is the final step in protecting our right to clean air and water and safe food for all Canadians. This ensures that we all benefit from a healthy environment, world-class standards and a say in the decisions that affect our health.

Appendix 4:

Blue Dot online communications guidelines

We encourage and support Blue Dot volunteers interested in contributing to blogs, social networks and photo and video sharing sites.

The following guidelines will help you build your local Blue Dot community online, talk about your involvement in an open and transparent way, and ensure that the reputations of the Blue Dot movement and the David Suzuki Foundation are upheld.

All kinds of communications and social networking tools are available to people who want to share insights, express opinions and contribute to conversations online. While we recognize the value of building your local movement's online community, it's important that your communications align with the Blue Dot movement's guidelines.

Be transparent

Please be honest and transparent about who you are. That means clearly stating the following in the name and/or description of your accounts:

- You are a Blue Dot movement volunteer;
- Your social media account is a Blue Dot community account;
- Your opinions are your own; and
- You do not speak on behalf of the Blue Dot movement or the David Suzuki Foundation.

Facebook: To grow your audience and have the most impact, start a **Facebook group** rather than a Facebook page and "like" the official [Blue Dot movement Facebook page](#).

Twitter: Use a name, handle and description that clearly identifies you as a Blue Dot volunteer, e.g.:

- Twitter name: Winnipeg Blue Dot
- Twitter handle: BlueDotWpg
- Twitter description: Winnipeg citizens for the right to a healthy environment. All opinions are our own.

Your honesty will help the Blue Dot movement remain trusted and respected among our communities.

Be accurate

Do your research and check your facts. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (e.g., images, videos, studies, etc.) and be careful about your tone, spelling, grammar, etc.

Respect copyright laws

Please respect laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including the Blue Dot movement and the David Suzuki Foundation's own copyright and trademarks.

Be generous

The internet is all about connecting with people and building community. If you see something interesting, valuable or relevant — share it! The more you share pertinent content, the easier it will be to grow and nurture your online community.

Be a good online participant

Every Blue Dot volunteer and supporter has a story to tell and being interesting is one of the cornerstones of successful online communication. This means you're likely to have something to add to this rich diversity — check out Blue Dot's [latest news](#) for inspiration! Writing captivating online content is also hard work and takes commitment. If you decide to jump into the online world, post regularly and well. Tell stories, share compelling content and give your community a chance to respond. Make it interesting and have fun!

Uphold our fundamental principles

Your online communications should be transparent, ethical and accurate. The Blue Dot movement expects volunteers to respect the fundamental principles and core values of our parent organization, the David Suzuki Foundation.

Every volunteer for the David Suzuki Foundation is an ambassador and represents the organization in our communities. **Please keep in mind the following when posting online:**

Aboriginal Peoples Policy: The David Suzuki Foundation recognizes the rights and title of Aboriginal Peoples, guided by the 2010 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. We commit to respectfully engage with Aboriginal Peoples when our work concerns their interests.

Science Integrity Protocol: The David Suzuki Foundation uses evidence-based information and analysis to promote progressive policy-making and public awareness of complex environmental issues. To uphold scientific principles, we commit to peer review of research and analysis, transparency and access to relevant information, and accuracy in our communications.

Conclusion

Thank you for your passion and enthusiasm. We sincerely appreciate your efforts to help build the Blue Dot movement in your local community. If you have questions don't hesitate to get in touch. Email municipal@bluedot.ca.