

Toronto's Communities Prepare for the G8 and G20 Summits

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The leaders of the G20 countries, as well as their central bank governors, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the European Union (EU) will be in Toronto on June 26-27, 2010. Nearly 20,000 delegates, 15,000 armed police and 5,000 media personnel will descend on Toronto to make it a very hot June weekend indeed. Gay Pride festivities have been moved but visitors to the city will be here, as will thousands of protestors, activists and delegates. The real question is: will Toronto's residents and long-term social movements join them?

For Sabrina Gopaul, an organizer with LIFEmovement and Jane and Finch Action Against Poverty, the answer is clear: "Our people are hungry, they are jobless, we have few schools and lesser social services - all these attacks are a direct result of the G20 policies and we will protest against them. We have real community solutions on how to take care of each other, have good food, create economic opportunities and we will make sure that those are seen, heard and shared."

A Brief History of the G8/G20

The [first G6 Summit](#) took place in 1975, following a smaller meeting organized by the United States in 1974. In attendance were France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This was a time of the oil crisis where oil-rich states increased the price of oil in an unsettled global economy, causing tremors in the hallways of power across Europe and North America. Canada joined in 1976 and Russia joined in 1997.

At the top of the G8 leaders' agenda has always been international trade and managing relations between the once-colonizers and the colonized (the developed and the underdeveloped worlds). In asserting their security, the G8 places access to energy and other strategic resources at the forefront of discussions. The G8 Summit is also the place where ad-hoc consensus is reached on a myriad of issues that never make the public statement. The decisions that emerge at the G8 meetings, some formally in the Summit Declaration, and the many others as a result of side-conversations, impact how the world lives and works.

The G20 Summit established in 1999 was initially a meeting of the central bank governors and financial ministers of emerging powers and the G8, firmly entrenched within the International Monetary Fund-World Bank alliance (the so-called Bretton Woods' sisters). The G20 is comprised of the G8 as well as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia,

Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Korea, Turkey and the EU. In November 2008, under the weight of another financial crisis, George Bush hosted the first the first full G20 Summit where the leaders of the countries joined their finance ministers and central bank governors as well as representatives from IMF and World Bank. The G20's central policy focus is maintaining global financial stability and the ongoing economic, military and financial dominance of the richest states and their corporations.

"The G8 is saving the banks, while ignoring lives," said David McNally, Professor of Political Science at York University, noting the group's failure to meet the 2005 Gleneagles aid commitments. "Two years after promising \$20-billion to deal with the world food crisis – a pittance compared to what they have put into banks – the G8 has delivered only one-tenth of what it pledged," McNally added.

Resisting G8/G20 Rule

Resistance to the G8/G20 has been manifold and diverse. Organizations such as Make Poverty History and the Ottawa-based 'At the Table Campaign' have tried to influence the G8, hoping that they could be lobbied to take into account grassroots concerns.



JUSTICE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES!
NO TO THE G8/20! YES TO TAKING BACK OUR CITY!

June 25, 2010
2:30 PM
Allan Gardens
(corner of Carleton St. & Sherbourne St.)
Rally/March/Block Party and Tent City
Wheelchair access van:
SE corner Dundas & Yonge
2:00 PM
69 available

Toronto Community Day of ACTION G8/G20 Convergence
Our demands:
25june.wordpress.com
or call 416.925.6939
For other events and actions opposing the G8/G20 Summits, visit <http://g20.torontomobilize.org>

Stephen Lewis in a recently released statement called on Summit leaders to live up to their UN Millennium Goals and the promise to halve poverty by 2015. Lewis said, "This is an historic moment for Canada. We are in a position to lead the world in resolving one of the

great moral issues of our time.”

“We’re calling for a breakthrough plan to tackle climate change,” said Zoë Caron, of WWF-Canada. The choice is clear for the G8 this June: lead us forward in this transformation to a clean green economy.” Others disagree, insisting that the G20 has no business meeting.

“The G20 and G8 are meetings of the very people promoting war and environmental destruction around the world. They push people out of their homes and off their land, force many to migrate and to work in dangerous, temp jobs,” says Mohan Mishra of grassroots organization [No One Is Illegal - Toronto](#) that is involved in planning demonstrations in June 2010. “These people should not be meeting to make undemocratic decisions about our lives. People in our communities know what we need and are working to make sure that we create the world we wish to live in, the G20 leaders are simply in the way.”

Though much of the debate in the corporate media has focused on security threats, fences, the relocation of weddings, consistently typecasting the mobilizations as the protestors pitted against the cops – conversations on the ground are markedly different. Lesley Wood is an organizer with the [Ontario Coalition Against Poverty](#) and a sociologist who has studied large mobilizations for over a decade. Wood noted that: “Since Seattle in 2001 when the anti-globalization movement had its coming out party, many have questioned the lack of participation of community groups and ongoing campaigns in large mobilizations. People doing anti-police brutality work, organizing in housing, growing food, fighting for childcare have sometimes struggled to connect their local struggles with one-time circuses that come through their city.” Wood believes that Toronto is seeing a coalescing of social movements and as June 2010 comes closer, participation from community groups in Toronto has greatly increased.

“Having seen the bruised faces of our mothers; the broken legs of our youth; the public humiliation of our neighbours; summer curfews and the militarization of our schools, our communities are constantly reminded that law enforcement does not solve crime it sustains it; just like military efforts around the world do not create peace, they destroy it,” says Greg Walsh, an activist in the Jane and Finch community who sees resistance to the G20 as part of his everyday work.

Considering that the G8/G20 Summits are taking place on traditional Anishinaabe territory, and the G20 on lands unceded Mississauga lands. The G8/G20 leaders assert neo-colonial relations on much of the world’s population, and therefore much of the organizing for the convergence is under an Anti-Colonial umbrella.

Clayton Thomas-Mueller of the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#) and part of Defenders of the Land that is organizing a Day of Action for Indigenous Sovereignty explains: “Here in Canada, Indigenous people have been dealing with the effects of globalization and neoliberal economic policies for some time, all of which have had a tremendously negative effect on our sovereignty and ecology. This can best be described through the crown jewel of U.S. energy and security policy, the Alberta Tar Sands. Access to the tar sands is being enabled by massive free trade driven development such as the Pacific gateway initiative and the Atlantic gateway initiative both of which mean the development of super ports, highways, pipelines, railways providing the transportation of resources such as the synthetic crude much easier to be accessed by G8 members, most specifically the United States. The effects of these kinds of development have devastating impacts on Indigenous people

across the continent of North America.”

Join the Mobilization Against the G8/G20

Unlike many of the convergences of the past – this June might just see a real community based mobilization against the G8/G20 that puts forward its own campaigns for local lives while pushing for global transformation. Nay sayers will remain of course, but it seems that a real grounded local/global movement is emerging in Canada. For details on the Justice for Our Communities demonstration, visit 25june.wordpress.com. Further details at the bottom of the article.

What people are saying about the G8/G20:

Kole Kilibirada from the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid that is fighting to build a local and global boycott and divestment campaign against the government of Israel:

“Whether it was the G8’s complacency during Israel’s brutal 33-day war on the people of Lebanon in the summer of 2006, or its enthusiastic support for the more recent slaughter in Gaza in January 2009 – the G8 has repeatedly shown its willingness to continue criminalizing any expression of Palestinian self-determination while financing, arming and applauding the apartheid state of Israel.”

Pragash Pio, a Tamil community organizer and Canadian HART activist in Toronto:

“Our local issues are connected to global ones. Many people in our community are sending money home to assist their families, rebuild homes and lives and as a result impoverishing themselves. Things like the War on Terror paradigm which is really a war on racialized and Diaspora people is interfering with everyday lives here and elsewhere. People understand that it’s not just local levels of apartheid, the G8/G20 is the coordinating committee of global apartheid, they make us refugees, they attack us, they are the systemic side of injustice and must be resisted.”

Kimia Ghomeshi, National Youth Climate and G20 Organizer at the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition:

“The G8/G20 are indebted to the global south, displaced migrants and indigenous peoples everywhere for creating and furthering the climate crisis. This is a global catastrophe that will not go away through mere lifestyle changes like riding bikes or changing light bulbs. It requires a complete transformation away from the global capitalist system that justifies the ravaging of our lands and exploitation of our communities.”

Sultana Jahangir of the South Asian Women’s Rights Organization based in Scarborough who is organizing contingents to join the rallies:

“International capitalism displaces people from all over the world by economical, military and environmental aggression. In Bangladesh three million people [have been] displace[d] and our homeland has become the biggest human exporter in 2009. Canadian Government traffic and displace

people to exploit them. They bring migrant women and totally marginalize them. They are forced to live in margin of society in either low paid job or as baby machines. We immigrant women demand the rich to stop marginalize us and demand to provide childcare, health, education, housing and all services.”

Andrew Mindszenty, a member of DAMN 2025, a radical cross-disability coalition that is mobilizing against the G8/G20:

“Canada segregates disabled people with more than pervasive physical barriers: we are impoverished by Canada’s ‘social assistance’; denied at its international borders; confined in its institutions and prisons; ostracized by social isolation; and largely excluded even from social movements. DAMN2025 is allying with other oppressed groups to resist the G8/G20’s agenda of making the rich richer on the backs of poor people around the world.”

The Plans

A People’s Summit is being planned from June 18-20, 2010 that will be a social forum style conference bringing together community groups, NGOs, labour unions, faith groups and others to educate and be agitated.

Following the People’s Summit, actions and demonstrations are taking place across Toronto, which are being organized by different networks. These include a demonstration for Indigenous Sovereignty and Self-Determination on June 24, a massive mobilization by Community Groups on June 25th calling for [‘Justice For Our Communities’](#) that will focus on many of the issues outlined above.

A labour march and major anti-colonial, anti-capitalist actions are also planned on June 26th and June 27th. Details of all events can be found on [Toronto Community Mobilization Network](#)’s website which is the body coordinating and supporting many of the actions taking place between June 21-27, 2010. •

Syed Hussan is a writer and organizer for migrant justice and in defence of indigenous sovereignty. He is involved with many movements for justice in Toronto, and is building a network of people of colour, indigenous people, disAbled folks, queer folks, women, poor and working class people on the streets of Toronto in June 2010. He is involved with the [Toronto Community Mobilization Network](#) and the [Justice For Our Communities](#) demonstration.

To learn more about the G8 and G20:

[Toronto Community Mobilization Network – tools](#)

[G8 Information Centre](#)

[G20 Information Centre](#)

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