

# ANNUAL REPORT 2005



## NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

THIS PAST YEAR HAS BEEN AN EXCITING AND challenging one for the Council of Canadians. We marked the Council's 20th anniversary at our Annual General Meeting in November, where we celebrated the dedicated activists who are on the front lines of the fight for social and economic justice, both at home and abroad. I was lucky enough to spend this year meeting with Council members across Canada, as part of our Citizens' Inquiry on Canada-U.S. Relations and the 25-city tour for my most recent book, *Too Close for Comfort: Canada's Future Within Fortress North America*. As always, I was humbled by the energy and passion that our grassroots supporters bring to the fight for a better Canada.

Early in 2005, the Council's Board of Directors decided that the overarching framework for all of our political work would be to uphold Canadian sovereignty and democracy in an interdependent world, concentrating on opposing further integration with, and reclaiming lost sovereignty from, the United States. We focused our campaigns on public health care, fair trade, safe food, clean water and energy sovereignty, within the context of preserving Canadian independence and democracy in the face of Bush's America.

With the recent election of a Conservative government, the Council of Canadians has even more to fight for. Stephen Harper has never hidden his agenda: to dismantle our cherished social programs like health care and open them up to privatization; to support unilateral U.S. military interventions such as the war in Iraq; to add "property rights" to the Charter of

Rights and Freedoms; and to implement massive tax cuts for large corporations.

We need your support now, more than ever. Working together, we can stop private health care, protect Canadian water, promote fair trade, and support peace at home and abroad. It's going to be a rocky ride, but I know – and you know – that a better Canada is possible.

Maude Barlow



Christina Riley

**Maude Barlow**  
National Chairperson

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

THE RECENT FEDERAL ELECTION RESULTS MIGHT have left you feeling deflated. But at the Council of Canadians, we know the power and passion of our members and chapter activists can't be kept down for long. In fact, the explosion of Council activity during the federal election campaign proved that Council members are more committed than ever before to building a better Canada.

In 2005, the Council of Canadians refined its mission, concentrating our work on opposing the threat of "deeper integration" with the United States. We bolstered our communications staff, improved our strategic planning process, and made much greater use of various "action alerts" and other campaign tools. We are working on new initiatives to reach out to youth and cultural communities. The



Tony Foubse

**John Urquhart**  
Executive Director

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John Bonmar



Anil Naidoo

At the WTO ministerial in Hong Kong in December, activists sang Christmas carols, urging negotiators to promote fair trade and protect public services.



Council has never been so ready to take on our better-funded opposition.

But we still need your help. Without the generous donations of our members, and the dedicated participation of our chapter activists, we would not be able to play the vital role that we do.

In 2006, we will continue to promote a citizen-centred vision of social and economic justice. With your support, we will act as the watchdog of the Conservative government, standing up for the social programs and progressive policies that Council activists have fought so hard to shape and preserve.

John Urquhart

## DEEP INTEGRATION

THE YEAR 2005 CONFIRMED WHAT THE Council of Canadians has been saying for years: “deep integration” with the United States is not just a theory – it’s a fact. And the election of a Harper government guarantees that the push for closer economic, political and social integration with the U.S. will only accelerate in the coming months and years.

But the Council of Canadians has been leading the fight against deep integration with the help of the thousands of people who signed petitions, wrote letters, met with MPs and held events in neighbourhoods across Canada. In 2005, we wrapped up a 10-city Citizens’ Inquiry on Canada-U.S. Relations, and launched its final report on Parliament Hill. We produced a “Citizen’s Guide to Fighting Deep Integration,” and distributed thousands of copies during Maude Barlow’s 25-city speaking tour to support her latest book, *Too Close for Comfort: Canada’s Future Within Fortress North America*. Council activists also circulated 100,000 copies of our voter’s guide during the federal election, urging candidates to reject deep integration, and stand up for a better Canada.

## PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

CANADA’S PUBLIC HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IS under threat. Private investors are clamouring to cash in on Canadian health care, saying that people should be able to pay money to access health care services faster.

But the answer to wait times is not to let some people pay their way to the front of the line. The Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling in the *Chaoulli v. Attorney General of Quebec* case opened the door to the Americanization of Canada’s health care system. Under Chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Canada cannot give preference to Canadian companies over U.S. ones, even for the provision of health care services. This means that U.S. for-profit health care companies could get the same funding for their services from the federal government as is currently allocated to the Canadian public system.

The Council of Canadians has been fighting back. Working with a broad coalition of partner organizations, unions and Council chapters, we produced and distributed fact sheets and media releases urging the federal government to stop private health care in Canada. During the federal election, we produced window signs and billboards that told candidates, “Stop private health care. Profit is not the cure.” As a member of the Canadian Health Coalition, we co-sponsored a national conference on “Wait Times: The Facts, the Politics and the Solutions.” Our chapters have been involved at the regional and provincial levels to preserve public health care.

This year, we will be redoubling our efforts to fight private health care, and to protect and promote the public health care system that all Canadians need and deserve.

## FAIR TRADE

IN 2005, WE SAW GLOBAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS either stall or collapse, and heard criticism of free trade from the most unlikely sources. In the aftermath of the softwood lumber decision, even the biggest supporters of NAFTA began to question its validity. And the free trade agenda ran into problems on all fronts.

Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations ground to a halt. At the World Trade Organization (WTO), developing countries dug in their heels and refused to trade away their local industries in exchange for a paltry offer of “development” aid. It was a good year to think about alternatives to corporate-dominated free trade.

On July 8, 2005, the Superior Court of Ontario dismissed The Council of Canadians’ and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers’ (CUPW) constitutional challenge of NAFTA’s infamous Chapter 11. That same day, the Council announced that we would appeal the ruling, arguing that NAFTA undermines the role of Canadian courts and offends both the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Bill of Rights. Meanwhile, the United Postal Service (UPS) case against Canada Post went before a NAFTA tribunal in December 2005. In a few months, this secretive panel of trade experts will decide whether Canada’s public postal system constitutes unfair competition for the U.S.-based company, and whether UPS should be compensated by Canadian taxpayers for loss of potential profits.

In 2005, we sent out several action alerts, asking people to write to Canada’s trade minister, urging him to either “fix or nix” NAFTA. The Council also posted a “NAFTA Inaction Watch” feature on our website, marking the federal government’s refusal to consider a better trade policy for Canada.

The trade campaign focused most of its time and resources on preparing for the December 2005 WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong. The Council worked with other organizations to lobby the government not to trade away public services and protections for Canadian farmers at the WTO. The Council’s Trade Campaigner also completed a two-week tour of the Atlantic region in 2005, and will be visiting other parts of Canada in 2006, discussing fairer alternatives to our current trade system.

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## CLEAN WATER

IN 2005, THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS’ CLEAN Water program mobilized people in Canada and around to world to fight commodifica-

tion and bulk exports of water. We made valuable connections with grassroots activists, indigenous communities, union members, seniors and students, spreading the word that “water is a human right and should not be sold for profit.”

Council activists in St. Catharines, Brockville, London, Kingston, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Cambridge and Montreal participated in public consultations on the Great Lakes Annex, sending a strong message of “no diversions, no exceptions.” This capped two years of Council opposition to the Annex. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Quebec Premier Jean Charest signed the Annex Agreement on December 13, 2005, but the Council of Canadians continues to speak out about the implications it will have on water diversions, as well as governance and public participation in management, of the waters we share with the U.S.

In April, the Council brought together activists and key organizations from across Canada at a National Water Forum. The meeting resulted in the formation of the Water Commons Network, a new meeting place for information-sharing and joint action.

On the international stage, the Council’s Blue Plant Project continued its campaign to secure a treaty on the right to water at the United Nations. Working with a coalition of partners, the Blue Planet Project supported local struggles against water privatization, while also collaborating to develop an enforceable legal mechanism to promote publicly financed and managed water systems. A good part of 2005 was spent preparing for the World Water Forum in Mexico City in March 2006, where civil society representatives will send a strong message to water privateers that the world’s water is not for sale.

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## SAFE FOOD

IN 2005, THE COUNCIL’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS made the difficult decision to phase out our work on Safe Food over a two-year period. Our work on safe food continues during this time of transition as we promote food sovereignty, community control and sustainable farming, and reject the integration of



Marcela Olivera, Eduardo Sousa and Maude Barlow joined Latin American activists in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2005, in a march to promote the right to water.



Laura Sewell

Gerard Lambert, Margaret Haydon, Cathy Holtslander, Victoria Gibb-Carsley and Shiv Chopra on March 24 in front of Parliament Hill, shortly after Cathy presented to the House Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food about the dangers of Bill C-27.



Cliff White

**Raging Grannies (and Council chapter members) in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.**

Canada's food and agricultural policies with lower U.S. standards.

Over the past year, the Council's Beyond Factory Farming project led the national campaign against Bill C-27, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) Enforcement Act. The Bill would have applied the principle of "one inspection, one test, one certification" throughout North America, to conform to the federal government's Smart Regulation agenda. The government touted C-27 as simple "housekeeping" to modernize the CFIA, but the Council maintained that the bill would have forced Canada's food regulators to follow Washington's trade and commerce agenda, instead of protecting the health and safety of the Canadian food supply. While C-27 died on the order paper when Parliament dissolved, the Council will closely monitor any attempts in 2006 to enact similar legislation.

In 2006, Beyond Factory Farming will become a new entity, separate from the Council of Canadians. The coalition has grown to 43 members and has become a strong and important voice on the negative impacts of factory farming on farmers and consumers.

This year also saw the launch of the Council's GE-Free Canada Campaign, a grassroots effort by farmers, environmentalists and Canadian citizens concerned with issues of food safety and food sovereignty. In March, the Council worked with a coalition of NGOs, faith groups and unions to sponsor a delegation of farmers, scientists and policy analysts from the developing world that travelled to Canada to spread the message that GE crops are not the answer to world hunger.

In 2006, Council chapters will continue to work toward the passage of GE-Free Zone resolutions in their communities. Chapters are also taking part in the nation-wide Ban Terminator campaign, distributing postcards and email petitions. The Council is currently a member of the Gene Allies network, and we are contributing ideas and resources to strengthen the network during this time of transition to ensure that the issue of genetic engineering stays in the spotlight – now and in the future.

## ENERGY SECURITY

DURING THE PAST YEAR, THE COUNCIL OF Canadians took a stand against the further integration of our energy supplies with the U.S., and urged the federal government to promote Canadian energy independence and renewable energy resources. In 2005, oil prices spiked, and the government told us this was due to supply shortages and increased demand. What they didn't say was that the "increased demand" is coming from the energy-hungry United States.

Canada now produces about 40 per cent more oil than it consumes, but has to rely heavily on imported oil from offshore. Thanks to NAFTA, Canada exports 70 per cent of the oil and 61 per cent of the natural gas we produce each year to the United States. NAFTA prevents us from selling our energy resources at rates lower than we sell them in the U.S. We also can't ever cut back on the proportion of energy we produce and sell to the United States, even in times when our country runs short.

In July, the Council opposed the sale of Terasen Inc., a Vancouver-based petroleum transporter, to Houston's Kinder Morgan. The deal gave the new combined company control of 64,000 km of oil and gas pipelines in Canada and the U.S. Thanks to some quick and effective organizing by the Council's BC/Yukon regional office, the B.C. Utilities Commission received more than 8,000 letters of comment about the sale, the largest in its history.

The Council also spent 2005 raising opposition to the Mackenzie Gas Project, a \$7 billion development that would build two underground natural gas pipelines in the Mackenzie Valley to carry gas to northern Alberta. The Council expressed concerns about the project's potential environmental consequences, as well as the impact it would have on Canada's energy security.

The Council of Canadians will continue working with other progressive organizations to develop a vision for a new national energy strategy – one that will protect Canada's energy supply, preserve the environment, and allow Canadians to pay a fair price to heat their homes in the winter.

