

Annual Meeting Busts the Myths of Continental Integration

by **Donna James**



The Council of Canadians held its 23rd Annual General Meeting in Edmonton in October 2008,

bringing together Council members and activists from across the continent to challenge the myths of continental energy integration. This year's gathering built on the demand for a halt to new tar sands approvals through panels, workshops and a march to the Alberta Legislature.

PUBLIC FORUM

More than 500 people attended the opening event to hear Maude Barlow, scientist Dr. David Schindler and journalist and author Andrew Nikiforuk speak about the rapid pace of tar sands development and its devastating effects on the environment, energy and water resources.

PANELS AND WORKSHOPS

The next day, three plenary panels and seven workshops featured a wide array of prominent speakers, including Michael Mercredi of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation; Laura Carlsen of the International Relations Centre in Mexico City; Eriel Deranger from

Rainforest Action Network; Diana Gibson representing Parkland Institute; Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network; J. David Henry, a conservation ecologist; Mike Hudema from Greenpeace; David Hughes, a geoscientist; Gordon Laxer, Director of the Parkland Institute and Council Board member; Gil McGowan, President of the Alberta Federation of Labour; and Lindsay Telfer of the Sierra Club of Canada.

BRINGING THE BOOM TO THE STREETS!

On Saturday afternoon, 200 activists marched to the Alberta Legislature demanding a halt to new tar sands approvals until a full environmental assessment has been done. The rally featured speeches from Maude Barlow, Tom Goldtooth, Dave Eggen, Michael Mercredi and Edmonton-Strathcona MP

Joan Teghtmeyer, Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Michael Mercredi, Diana Gibson and Mel Teghtmeyer (left to right) proudly display their awards at the Council's annual meeting in Edmonton.

Linda Duncan. Among the crowd were members of the local Raging Grannies and residents of Fort Chipewyan who have been affected by tar sands activities.

Michael Mercredi spoke about his community's fight against the "slow industrial genocide" that oil companies are waging on the people in his hometown of Fort Chipewyan.

Maude Barlow spoke to the crowd about her first visit to the tar sands earlier that week. With a delegation of 25 Council staff, board members and chapter activists, the group got an up-close look at tar sands devastation. Maude and Council Vice-Chair Leo Broderick then flew over the site in a helicopter. She compared the landscape to Mordor, a fictional dark middle earth in J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings books.

AWARDS CEREMONY

A shared Activist of the Year Award was presented to Diana Gibson, Research Director with the Parkland Institute, for her advocacy and research in the area of energy policy in Alberta and Canada, and to Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Executive Director of Public Interest Alberta, for his contribution to public policy and advocacy in Alberta and Canada.

The Ken Wardroper Founder's Award was given to Mel and Joan Teghtmeyer, Calgary Chapter activists, for their contribution to the Council of Canadians and their work in promoting grassroots activism.

A Special Award was given to the Community of Fort Chipewyan for exceptional leadership in exposing and resisting the impacts of tar sands development. The award was accepted by Michael Mercredi.

With the help of rabble.ca, the Public Forum was simultaneously webcast across the country for those who could not attend in person. To hear keynote speeches from the Council of Canadians' 2008 AGM, visit www.rabble.ca.

Donna James is Executive Assistant to the Board of Directors and organizes the Council's annual general meetings.



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