



# Annual Report 2008

## NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



Together, we have continued the movement for social and economic justice, and for a better country and a better world. 2008 was a year marked by many victories – from growing awareness of the crucial importance public water plays for us all to the derailment of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP). Citizens from across the country continue to come together, working for change and holding all governments to account.

In 2008 I travelled to different parts of the world speaking about the urgent need to declare water a human right. I was thrilled and honoured to be appointed Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the United Nations. This offers the wonderful opportunity to build on the work and support of Council of Canadians members to ensure that water is declared a human right so it can be available to all, and not made a commodity that can be bought and sold.

I was also in New Orleans for the fourth SPP Summit. As I described in a past issue of *Canadian Perspectives*, it was truly a “summit without citizens.” Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper continued the Liberal government legacy of this secretive tri-national agreement – which has profound effects on the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the civil liberties and human rights we should enjoy – by

meeting behind closed doors without allowing any true engagement from Canadian citizens.

The Council’s annual general meeting was once again an amazing opportunity to bring people together. This year we were in Alberta, where we witnessed first-hand the devastating environmental and social impacts of the tar sands. We joined with First Nations and called for a halt to the development of huge swaths of tar sands, which is destroying boreal forests and turning vast amounts of water into toxic tailings lakes. We will continue to fight to ensure that Canadians’ energy needs are not pushed aside by government commitments to make Canada an “energy superpower.”

As always, I have been inspired by the thousands of Council members and supporters I meet on this journey. As we work together, I have no doubt 2009 will present us with more opportunities for positive change.

Maude Barlow  
National Chairperson

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Over the past year impressive strides have been made on progressive social and economic issues in this country. The Council of Canadians continued to play a lead role

in bringing to prominence issues such as the SPP, NAFTA renegotiation, recognizing water as a human right and the crucial importance of maintaining social programs such as public health care.

In 2008 we saw the fall of the Harper minority government followed by speculation that a majority could be within the Conservatives’ reach. The Council ensured that Canadians knew where the parties stood on our vital issues through our nationally used voter’s guide, fact sheets and other tools. As a non-partisan organization we did not endorse any party; rather, our focus remained on the parties’ platforms and on promoting a progressive political agenda for Canada, including meaningful electoral reform.

The Council of Canadians has a long history of being at the forefront of key political issues. Many years ago we fought the bank mergers and won – a victory that is now being credited with saving Canadians from being harder hit in these tough economic times. As each year passes, we mark our victories with the knowledge that as Canada’s largest citizens’ advocacy organization our members can make a difference. None of our work would be possible without the support of our generous and dedicated members who continue to remind us that a better Canada is possible. If you are not already a member of the Council, please consider joining us today.

John Urquhart  
Executive Director



## BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

The Council of Canadians' work is built on a strong foundation of timely and strategic campaigns. Through our campaigns we continue to fight for the values, social programs and progressive policies that Canadians believe in. We work to protect public water, ensuring that it remains a public resource available to all without cost; we promote fair trade deals that put environmental and social concerns ahead of corporate interests; we protect public programs like health care from the threat of privatization; and we encourage government action for stable, secure and sustainable energy policies.

There are many people who help in these efforts – our thousands of members and supporters across the country and around the world, our staff both in Ottawa and in our regional offices across Canada, our national board of directors, our tireless Chairperson, Maude Barlow, and our committed chapter activists who put these campaigns and progressive issues into action in more than 70 communities across Canada.

Because we are a membership-based organization, these efforts are almost entirely supported by generous contributions from like-minded people who support the citizen advocacy work of the Council of Canadians. Together, we give people a voice. Our independence as an organization is maintained by not accepting any money from corporations or governments. You can read more about our finances and expenditures at the end of this report.

The year 2008 was marked by encouraging wins. Here are some campaign highlights from the past year:

### DEEP INTEGRATION

The momentum in the fight against the Security and Prosperity Partnership of



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North America (SPP) reached new levels in 2008 – to the point where some pundits began to declare the sweeping and secretive trade agreement “dead.” But we have remained vigilant on the issue because while politicians may have backed away from openly supporting the SPP, government working groups are still pushing ahead the SPP agenda behind closed doors, and corporate lobbyists are encouraging the government to form even stronger ties with the United States.

We were in New Orleans in April for the fourth annual SPP summit, joining labour organizations and other concerned groups to say that the SPP is undemocratic and not representative of the views of the majority of Canadians. And we had the proof. In the days leading up to the summit, the Council of Canadians released a comprehensive report titled *Not Counting Canadians: The Security and Prosperity Partnership and public opinion*. In it, we revealed that the majority of Canadians agree that Canada should be able to set its own independent environmental, health and safety standards even if this might reduce cross-border trade opportunities with the United States; that Canada should establish an energy policy that provides reliable supplies



of oil, gas and electricity at stable prices and protects the environment even if this means placing restrictions on exports and foreign ownership of Canadian supplies; that Canada should have a national water policy and ban bulk water exports; and that the SPP should be debated and submitted to a vote in Parliament.

We also continued our hard-hitting SPP watch at [www.integratethis.ca](http://www.integratethis.ca), where we posted regular updates on SPP developments and exposed the links between the SPP and a push for deeper economic integration with the United States. In June, we brought these issues to the street to protest then-U.S. presidential candidate John McCain's visit to Ottawa, where he lobbied a full house of corporate elite for stronger economic and trade ties between the two countries.

We also worked hard to get the SPP on the political agenda for the fall election. Thanks to the Council's efforts, the SPP became a political issue the Harper government could no longer ignore. From hundreds of media hits to actions across Canada opposing this sweeping agreement, our members and chapter activists helped make the SPP a political issue that was too sensitive for any party to support. Through our election materials we got the parties on record, and we will continue to hold them to account.

### WATER

The focus of our water campaign continued to be securing a national water policy that declares water a human right and protects our rivers, lakes and groundwater from privatization, pollution and bulk exports. Canada needs a strong policy that ensures our water resources are not only properly mapped, but also publicly maintained and protected from trade agreements like NAFTA, which



opens up Canada's water to other thirsty countries.

In 2008 we also brought the message of safe, clean, accessible water to communities across Canada by mobilizing thousands of citizens to fight water privatization and commodification. In March, Council chapters participated in World Water Day by holding marches, rallies, public forums and film screenings. Council chapters were active in getting the message out that water should be for "people not profits."

This past year also marked the launch of the Council's "Unbottle It!" campaign as people in communities across Canada joined the growing movement to ban the sale of bottled water in municipalities and institutions like school boards and university campuses. Thanks to these efforts, we've won bottled water bans in places such as Vancouver, B.C.; Edmonton, Alberta; Toronto, London and Owen Sound, Ontario; and Charlottetown, P.E.I., just to name a few.

We also joined a growing campaign to stop a federal government plan to turn some Canadian lakes into "tailing impoundment areas" – toxic dumpsites for mining companies. Working with Mining Watch Canada, we called on the federal government to close a loophole in the Mining Act that allows mining companies to pump their toxic waste into freshwater lakes and rivers.

### BLUE PLANET PROJECT

The Council of Canadians continued to fight for water justice internationally. Working with allied partners and organizations, our Blue Planet Project staff and National Chairperson Maude Barlow are raising awareness that the world is running out of safe, clean water.

In September, the Council's internationally renowned work on the human

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right to water was acknowledged when our National Chairperson, Maude Barlow, received a prestigious appointment as Senior Advisor on Water Issues to the President of the United Nations General Assembly. With the appointment, Maude continues her work to inform, educate, motivate and inspire people and governments into action to secure recognition of water as a human right at the United Nations. We also put a spotlight on the Canadian government's shameful position on the issue, and lobbied for its endorsement of the human right to water.

Internationally we joined other water justice activists to plan a strong presence for the 2009 World Water Forum in Turkey, where international corporate bigwigs will gather to set global water policy. We will bring the message that water should remain in the public commons, available to all without cost, and that water is a human right.

In 2008 we launched an exciting new report, written by Maude Barlow. *Our Water Commons: Toward a new freshwater narrative* speaks to the vital need for a new global perspective on water – to see it as a "commons," which is described by American Commons pio-

neer Jonathan Rowe as "the vast realm that lies outside of both the economic market and the institutional state that all of us use without toll or price."

### TRADE

The Council of Canadians has a strong history of speaking out against trade deals that hurt people, the environment and social policies. We continue to fight for trade agreements that put citizens' rights before corporate profits.

In 2008, we saw pressure mount for new and expanded trade deals. Locally, we expressed concerns about provincial deals like the Trade and Investment Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA), signed between British Columbia and Alberta, without public consultation. Ontario and Quebec are now looking at similar deals, and the Conservative government of Alberta is pushing for deals to be signed Canada-wide. We have supported and engaged in public education campaigns, written letters to the editor and been quoted in the media about why TILMA and similar provincial deals are bad for people and communities. In August 2008 we were at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) meeting to discourage municipal councillors across Ontario from following the TILMA path.

On the international trade front we were the first organization to speak out against a proposed Canada-European Union trade deal. We pressed the Harper government to release details of the planned deal, which is said to be even broader in scope than NAFTA.

We also called on the federal government to start serious discussions about the possibility of NAFTA renegotiation after U.S. President Barack Obama pledged during his campaign to revisit the deal to get better, enforceable protections for the environment and for



U.S. workers. Along with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, we helped organize a tri-national gathering of progressive policy makers to discuss NAFTA renegotiation (read more on page 19).

### ENERGY

With growing concern about the grim realities of climate change and diminishing energy resources globally, the Council of Canadians stepped up its call for a Canadian energy strategy that would give Canadians security of energy supplies, and strong policies that protect our environment and focus on renewable and sustainable energy solutions.

We began 2008 with our first ever National Day of Action in Support of a Canadian Energy Strategy. Our chapters used the day to call on the federal government to create an energy strategy that puts Canadians' needs first, and encourages a transition to renewable energy resources.

Regionally, our chapters and members continued to work on local energy concerns. From uranium mining proposals in Nova Scotia and Ontario, to opposing new nuclear reactor proposals in Alberta, to fighting Run of River projects in British Columbia that are set to privatize hundreds of local waterways, we were making a difference in communities across the country.

This year we also turned our attention to the tar sands. Located in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the tar sands are the world's largest and most devastating energy project. Just before our annual general meeting in Edmonton this year, Council staff, chapter representatives and some of our board members went to witness the destruction first-hand and received significant media attention for public calls to halt tar sands expansion.



**Whether it was securing bottled water bans in communities across the country, fighting health care privatization, challenging politicians on the secretive SPP agenda or rallying in support of a Canadian energy strategy and a national water policy, our chapters gave true meaning to the phrase "citizens in action."**

### HEALTH CARE

The Council continued its fight to ensure governments protect and enhance public health care, and end the privatization assault that is now spreading across Canada. We joined with provincial and national health care groups across the country pushing for a strengthened public health care system and fighting privatization proposals. Our chapters and members were there in communities across the country saying "no" to private health care. In Comox Valley and Campbell River, British Columbia, chapters fought a plan to build a new hospital through a public-private partnership (P3). In Calgary, Alberta, the Council of Canadians joined with Alberta's Friends of Medicare to protest the opening of the second Copeman Health Care Centre – a private facility that charges patients money to see a family doctor. And in Nova Scotia, we protested provincial government plans to contract out procedures to a private health care facility.

We were also in Montreal this summer to challenge the pro-privatization



agenda of the Canadian Medical Association. Members of the Council's Montreal chapter bid a happy farewell to outgoing CMA President and private clinic owner Brian Day, and called into question plans for incoming CMA and private clinic owner Robert Ouellet. Our chapter distributed fact sheets and leaflets informing people that "profit is not the cure" and that public health care provides better, more efficient care.

### CHAPTERS IN ACTION

Part of the Council's strength comes from our chapters. With concerned and active members in more than 70 communities across the country, our chapters provide a strong citizens' voice to local, regional and national issues. Through regular meetings, public events and actions, interactions with the media, and getting involved in issues in their communities, Council chapters act as true government watchdogs.

Over the past year, our chapters have been instrumental in securing key wins. Whether it was securing bottled water bans in communities across the country, fighting health care privatization, challenging politicians on the secretive SPP agenda or rallying in support of a Canadian energy strategy and a national water policy, our chapters gave true meaning to the phrase "citizens in action." We had more than 40 chapters participating in both the National Day of Action in support of a Canadian Energy Strategy, and World Water Day 2008. Chapters also helped organize regional tours to raise awareness about global capitalism and nuclear power generation. Chapter activists organized hundreds of local events across the country and appeared almost daily in local and regional newspapers, as well as radio and television news reports.



**RESOURCES**

We are proud to report that for more than 20 years, the Council of Canadians has remained independent of government and corporate influence. We do not receive any funds from these sources. This remarkable achievement is made possible by our generous members' financial contributions. More than \$5.1 million was received from memberships and contributions this fiscal year, which represents 93 per cent of total revenue. We have provided a Summary Statement of Revenue and Expenditure that shows our sources of revenue and how we spent this funding.

There are many ways you can contribute to our work. By becoming a

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member of the Council of Canadians, signing up for our monthly giving plan,

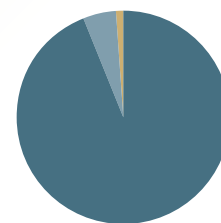
joining our Citizens' Agenda Fund, or planning a legacy gift, your generous support helps give our organization a voice on the social, economic and political issues and build a strong, independent and diverse Canada.

With your membership and generous donations, we were able to move our campaigns forward in 2008. We have garnered hundreds of media hits; produced educational fact sheets, brochures and reports; and delivered hard-hitting stories in our magazine *Canadian Perspectives*.

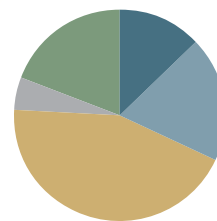
*A most heartfelt thank you to all of our donors for supporting our work!*

**THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS: STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2008**

	June 30, 2008	June 30, 2007
<b>Revenue</b>		
Memberships & contributions - 93%	\$5,113,085	\$4,943,242
Program funding contributions - 5%	285,277	326,595
Interest & other - 1%	79,659	94,912
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>5,478,021</b>	<b>5,364,749</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Chapter funding - 13%	680,339	666,362
Campaigns & communications - 19%	997,317	1,194,679
Development - 44%	2,277,886	2,160,692
Meetings, conferences, newsletters - 5%	250,743	227,699
Admin & program support - 19%	986,929	1,059,041
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>5,193,214</b>	<b>5,308,473</b>
Excess of revenue over expenditure for the year	<b>\$284,807</b>	<b>\$56,276</b>



**Revenue 2007-08**  
 Membership 93%  
 Programs 5%  
 Other 1%



**Expenditures 2007-08**  
 Development 44%  
 Campaigns & communications 19%  
 Administration 19%  
 Chapter funding 13%  
 Meetings, conferences, newsletter 5%