

# In Your Own Words

## Celebrating 25 years of the Council of Canadians

The heart and soul of the Council of Canadians are our members. As we celebrate 25 years of acting for social justice here in Canada and around the world, we asked our members from across the country to tell us why they joined the Council of Canadians, what this organization means to them, and what memories they have of our actions to make Canada – and the world – a better place. Here are a few thoughts and memories that were shared with us.

### WHY DID YOU JOIN THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS?



Ever since my early teens I found myself concerned about what I was becoming aware was happening, not just in my country, but in the world

at large. When I heard of the Council of Canadians, I felt certain that there was some hope of something better. There really were others who felt the same as I did. I have not been disappointed in what has been accomplished by my organization and I am proud to tell others that I am a long-time member.

**Edwin Schindler**  
Regina, SK

I wanted to make sure my voice was heard in the loudest and most meaningful way possible. As I don't have the time to meet with my officials as often as I'd like, I like to empower smart and influential activists, like those at the Council, to help further my ideal of a more progressive and equal Canada. It is such a source of pride for me. Nearly each day I'll encounter a topic in the news, or in conversation, and I can say, "Oh yeah, I was involved



with that thanks to the Council! I – and we – made a difference."

**Colby Briggs**  
Montreal, QC

I joined the Council of Canadians because I saw our government and big companies spoiling the land and destroying wilderness habitats and I felt that, as an ordinary citizen, I had little power to halt the process. The Council of Canadians gives citizens the power to unite, stand up and be counted.

**Armand Boisjoli**  
Orleans, ON

Someone gave my parents a copy of Maude Barlow's book *Parcel of Rogues* for a gift, and I found it at their home during a visit and read it. Then I saw a poster announcing a speech to be given by Maude, and I attended. I think I joined the Council that night after the speech.

**Greg DePaco**  
New Westminster, BC

In the Council I found an independent organization voicing concern about many environmental concerns I've had for years. I saw the Council's community of like-minded people as a megaphone for my single, faintly heard voice.

**Norm Esdon**  
Glenburnie, ON



### WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS MEAN TO YOU?

To me, the Council of Canadians is about education, empowerment and engagement. The Council inspires people to believe that change is possible. That we can come together as engaged citizens of Canada and of the larger global community to create the country – and the world – that we envision.



**Kathe Rogers**  
Toronto, ON

To me the Council of Canadians means global justice and hope. I view the Council as being immensely important and while it is Canadian, I believe the results of its advocacy often transcend our borders. We can see this in the great work around water justice (bravo on the UN declaration!) as well as in other campaign areas such as trade, the environment, energy, health care and others. The Council always seems to be there at the forefront of such important local and global issues. So while I find it difficult to remain optimistic in these tumultuous times I believe that so long as we have the Council there will always be hope.

**Stephen Rioux**  
Montreal, QC



occupation to unite Canadians in the common purpose of educating and mobilizing for a fairer and ecologically sustainable future for all the world's peoples.

**Jef Keighley**  
Halfmoon Bay, BC

I believe that as the government fails to address the needs of the everyday citizen and corporations continue their power hold on the media, the need for community-centred leadership will become paramount. The Council of Canadians can be one great means of strengthening community involvement in the political and social issues that will lead us to a better future.

**Taro Broughton**  
Golden, BC



society; it means sharing a vision with my fellow concerned citizens across the nation.

**Ginny Ratsoy**  
Kamloops, BC

The Council of Canadians is a meeting place for progressive, passionate, purposeful Canadians of all ages and backgrounds to join with each other and with people across this country and around the globe in supporting a common enter-

prise: forging a viable future. At a time when partisan politics leave many of us frustrated, the Council has led the way in showing the extraordinary effectiveness of an informed and engaged civil society. For me, the Council is about hope. It is hope-in-action.

**Fiona McMurrin**  
Welland, ON

**TELL US ABOUT ANY SPECIAL MEMORIES OF PAST COUNCIL CAMPAIGNS OR ISSUES THAT YOU THOUGHT REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE.**

Imagine my surprise when my own little corner of the world desperately needed the Council's help. Our cottage is near Tiny Township, where the infamous "Site 41" is located. Simcoe County wanted to place a landfill on top of the purest water in the world! This fight was about water, not garbage. Maude Barlow and the Council organized and came out to many of our "Walks for the Water." She and Council

members spoke to many of our politicians. We fought a long battle; some of us had been fighting this landfill for 25 years. The Council of Canadians banded together with First Nations people, farmers, Simcoe County citizens and other Canadian citizens. We couldn't have done it without the Council's help! We are forever grateful.

**Donna Deneault**  
Scarborough, ON

I recall attending an IMF/World Bank event in Washington and the strongest Canadian presence was through the Council of Canadians. The ongoing fights for openness and transparency, especially where trade deals such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the proposed Canada-European Union deal are concerned have been amazing and so revealing – and the Council has led the way. I am always amazed at what the Council can accomplish with the help of its members and with limited funds. I recall my late father who was a very quiet, gentle man telling me how the Council had contacted him and had gotten him to speak out for public health care through one of their phone campaigns and I know how much

he appreciated being able to do that.

**Leo Cheverie**  
York, PEI

I recall the defeat of the MAI, the victory over the FTAA, and the rout of the Security and Prosperity Partnership for North America – these were all very significant achievements. Our local chapter was successful in alerting our four municipal councils to the potential threat of Chapter 11 of NAFTA to its autonomy. Our biggest victory, and one that will make a big difference in the future, is the part we played in getting the present NDP government of Nova Scotia to pass legislation permanently banning the exploration and mining of uranium in the province.

**Margery Dahn**  
Lunenburg, NS

There are many big campaigns that come to mind: opposing mergers of Canada's "Big Banks"; defending water as a human right; opposing the privatization of Canada's health care system; fighting deep integration with the United States; opposing genetic engineering and the growth of factory farming in Canada; stopping bovine growth hormone from being added to milk – the list is very long.

**G.A. Quinton Kuschei**  
Oakville, ON

The MAI stands out as an example of what "public exposure" can do to inform the general public of what our government is doing – and continues to try to do, for that matter – behind closed doors to further a corporate agenda. The Council of Canadians, since that initiative, has taken on many more challenges in its efforts to ensure governmental transparency and to counter what appears, at times, to be a corporate-influenced government.

**Bob Hagman**  
Enderby, BC

**Thank you to all of our members across the country who join us in citizen advocacy. Without you, this work would not be possible.**

**You can read more member testimonials on our website at [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org).**