# Annual Meeting **Turns the Tide** in Saint John

**by Donna James**

**Amidst the worst global economic crisis to hit in decades, our 2009 Annual General Meeting focused on why the current economic model — based on consumerism, unsustainable growth and market priorities — has failed. Through keynotes speakers, panels and workshops, we looked at alternative ways to organize our economic future, ways that put people and the planet first. We gathered in Saint John, New Brunswick, last October with our members, allies and chapter activists from across the country to share ideas on how to "turn the tide" towards positive change and a just economy.**

**ABOVE LEFT: The Maude Barlow Founder's Award was presented to Sister Angie Martz in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the Council of Canadians and for her strong commitment to social justice. RIGHT: The Activist of the Year Award was presented to the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) in recognition of forty years of successful campaigning to protect air, land and water in New Brunswick.**

## PUBLIC FORUM

More than 300 people attended the opening event to hear the Council's National Chairperson Maude Barlow, author, journalist and lecturer Garry Leech, and Director of the Institute for Policy Studies from Washington, D.C. John Cavanagh speak about the causes and effects of the economic crisis on Canada, the Atlantic Region and the United States.

## PANELS AND WORKSHOPS

On Saturday, two plenary panels and eight workshops featured a wide array of expert speakers, including Janice Harvey, columnist, broadcaster and university lecturer; Marc Lee, researcher and writer, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; Peggy Nash, Assistant to the National President, Canadian Auto Workers; Scott Sinclair, Senior Research Fellow, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; Shannon Biggs, Director of Community and Green Rights Organizing, Global Exchange, U.S.; and Andrea Peart, researcher and writer, Canadian Labour Congress.

Saint John, as a major industrial player in the region's economy — it is known as the "Atlantica energy hub" — faces pollution, corporate control and mega-energy exports to the U.S. We organized a bus tour of Saint John with local experts David Thompson, Rob Moir and Council of Canadians board member Leticia Adair, to see both the pollution of this historic city and its natural wonders, and to talk about opportunities for green energy and more democratic development.

## CLIMATE (OF) CHANGE: RALLY FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

Saturday, October 24, marked a global day of action on climate change. That afternoon, AGM delegates joined local activists for a rally in downtown Saint John to demand that Canada be part of the climate change solution, not the problem. Speakers said governments need to commit to a new global deal that enacts real change to reduce emissions in line with science-based targets in a just and fair manner.

## AWARDS CEREMONY

AGM delegates, Council of Canadians board members and staff gathered to honour the 2009 Council of Canadians award recipients. The Activist of the Year Award was presented to the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) in recognition of forty years of successful campaigning to protect air, land and water in New Brunswick. The award was accepted by Stephanie Coburn, President of the CCNB.

The Maude Barlow Founder's Award was presented to Sister Angie Martz in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the Council of Canadians and for her strong commitment to social justice.

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

The Council's 25th Annual General Meeting, where we will be celebrating 25 years of acting for social justice, will be held October 22-24 in Ottawa, Ontario. Visit our website at www.canadians.org for updates. Registration will begin online in August.