Building Towards a Just Recovery in Canada

Why We Need a National Strategy on Long-term Care

The Council of Canadians’ 2019 Annual Report
Building Towards a Just Recovery in Canada

The Council of Canadians’ 2019 Annual Report

Help us Hit Our Year-end Fundraising Goal

A Just Recovery and Green New Deal in Oshawa

Maude Barlow Steps Down as the Council of Canadians’ Honorary Chairperson

Big Oil Bailouts are Undermining Climate Action

Chapter Activist Profile – Pierre Madden, Montreal, Quebec

Chapter Action Updates

Turning the Tide Against Bottled Water

Why We Need the Canada Water Agency – and What it Should do

Celebrating 10 Years of the Human Right to Water

The Council of Canadians believes that political literacy is crucial to regaining control of our communities and our country. We encourage you to copy articles from Canadian Perspectives – most conveniently fit on one or two pages. If you would like to reprint articles, or for any other questions, please contact us at 1-800-387-7177.

Past issues of Canadian Perspectives are available at www.canadians.org. ISSN 1188-6897

Publications Mail Agreement No. 4005620

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
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The Council of Canadians
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Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1X4
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Tel 1-800-387-7177


EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Molly Kane (on leave)

It seems like a lot of time has passed since COVID-19 arrived in Canada. A year ago, so much was happening: millions of people across the globe were taking to the streets demanding climate justice, Canadians went to the polls to elect a minority government, NAFTA was being renegotiated, Vancouver was about to become a Blue Community, and the struggle for Indigenous rights was ramping up across the land.

And then COVID hit. Millions of people lost their jobs, thousands died, and the pandemic uprooted our world in once unimaginable ways. We were shocked by the tragic loss of life in long-term care homes and how fragile our social safety net had become. The pandemic also exposed what far too many have long known or experienced first-hand: that economic inequality and systemic racism are painful realities in our country.

It has been a tough year, yet there is hope. Hope in the acts of generosity and social solidarity from ordinary people in communities large and small. Hope in the heroism of our frontline workers. Hope in the slogan “A Just Recovery for All” so we don’t repeat the mistakes of the past. A just recovery is about putting peoples’ well-being first and overhauling our economic system to ensure no one is left behind. It is about environmental sustainability and a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

The federal government has invested billions in response to the crisis. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is promising to deliver the long overdue national pharmacare and child-care programs, and to fix Canada’s tattered social safety net. But we’ve heard these promises before and have learned that it will take real public pressure to secure these programs. That is where the Council of Canadians’ role is essential to building campaigns and carrying out effective “political bargaining” with decision makers.

Conservative premiers will be trying to sabotage these initiatives, just as they have undermined climate policies at every turn. We need to shine the spotlight on their actions and hold them accountable for failing the people of Canada.

Our mission statement says: “The Council of Canadians brings people together through collective action and grassroots organizing to challenge corporate power and advocate for people, the planet and our democracy.”

How do we expand our influence across the country and recruit new activists and supporters to drive this vision?

In this last year we have undergone many changes to renew the Council’s capacity for political action. Our grassroots structure has been revived, and thousands of members have signed up. We have a new logo and look, we expanded our social media presence, and we are offering online tools for campaign organizing and Chapter support. The Council’s Board of Directors has the most diverse leadership in our history.

We are ready for the challenges ahead, building on our past success and a strong legacy of leadership. Last June, Maude Barlow stepped down from her position with the Council as Honorary Chairperson. Since our founding in 1985, she has provided unparalleled commitment and dedication to the Council of Canadians, its values, and efforts to bring people together for progressive change. We all thank her inspiration over these many years – she has truly modeled the best of leadership in our movement.

We must learn from each other to build a culture of understanding and be bold in our demands if we are to help determine what happens next in this country. Our members, supporters and chapter activists come from every walk of life and every part of Canada. Some of our families have been on this land for thousands of years, while others have just arrived. There is so much to be done to build a better world in these coming months. Let’s join together to make it possible.

JOHN CARTWRIGHT IS THE NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON OF THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS
There comes a moment in the life of every not-for-profit organization when it’s time to freshen our look and update our vision to better reflect who we are and the progress we aspire to achieve.

For us at the Council of Canadians, that time is now.

The Council of Canadians’ fresh (but familiar) branding includes a new logo, colours and fonts, as well as a refreshed mission and vision.

As you may know, the Council formed 35 years ago when a group of prominent Canadians came together to challenge political decisions that were moving Canada towards increased U.S. power and global trade that prioritized corporations over people.

The Council’s campaigns have evolved since then, expanding into areas such as clean water, fair trade, public health care, democracy, and the urgent action that is needed to address the climate crisis.

Through the years what has remained constant is our belief that real and lasting social change happens when people come together to act for the common good.

The Council’s new logo provides a nod to our roots – the maple leaf – but recognizes that it is only a part of our story. It is a story that needs to broaden to be inclusive to all peoples, including Indigenous Peoples, migrants and immigrants, and others. The upward slash in the logo indicates our forward movement together as we tackle the pressing social and economic injustices of our time.

For colours, we chose to expand on our historic shades of red, yellow and black to include teal, magenta, blue and other colours that will highlight the diversity of our work and campaigns. We will use them interchangeably in our logo to reflect this diversity. These colours are dynamic and inviting, just like we want the Council to be. Through our past discussions with donors, we were also mindful to update the fonts we use to ones that keep our online and print materials legible for all readers.

That’s not all that has been refreshed.

At the beginning of this year, we invited Council supporters to complete a survey to share feedback on the issues they care about most and identify areas where the Council can improve. We heard you and took action.

Over the past year, with the help of your valuable feedback, as well as feedback from our chapter activists, staff and Board members, we worked to rebuild our mission, vision and values and our “story of self” as an organization to be more reflective of our longer-term strategic goals.

Our mission: The Council of Canadians brings people together through collective action and grassroots organizing to challenge corporate power and advocate for people, the planet and our democracy.

Our vision: We advocate for a society built on caring for others and justice. We believe we can learn from the perspectives and struggles of others as we work together for a more just world.

The Council of Canadians believes we all do better when:

- We expand and improve our public services and social supports.
- We ensure access to clean water is a human right and stop water privatization.
- Our governments work for people and not for corporations or the wealthy 1%.
- Everyone lives with dignity and respect, and systems of oppression such as racism and colonization are dismantled.
- We learn, organize and act together.

You can read more about our values as an organization and our new “story of self” on our refreshed website at canadians.org/about-us.

We hope you are as excited about these updates as we are and see them as welcome improvements to the organization you care so much about.

RAVI JOSHI is the Communications Director for the Council of Canadians
“As workers and activists, we know that the only way to win is to fight. Articulating a vision that is bold and transformative is one of the most crucial and difficult components of the fight.”

These wise words were uttered by Green Jobs Oshawa organizer and laid-off GM worker Rebecca Keetch on a webinar this past April. Her statement has become more relevant as the intertwined health, economic and climate crises continue to unfold, and as work for a just recovery has begun.

A “just recovery” is a national economic plan that responds to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by prioritizing the needs of people and communities, not corporations. It is part of a Green New Deal that calls for rapid, inclusive and far-reaching transition at all levels of government to slash climate emissions, meet the demands of the multiple crises we face, respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and create over 1 million jobs in the process. Hundreds of organizations from across Canada have worked together to establish six principles for a just recovery to guide our society as we build out of these crises – principles that should help us build a better and fairer world than the one we had pre-COVID.

The work towards a just recovery and a Green New Deal is already happening in communities across the country. One example is unfolding in Oshawa, Ontario.

Green Jobs Oshawa (GJO) is a coalition of workers, community leaders, environmentalists, labour and social justice advocates who have come together to bring the almost-empty GM Oshawa auto assembly facility under public ownership in order to repurpose it for socially beneficial manufacturing. GJO is a great example of a just recovery brought to life.

MANUFACTURING A JUST RECOVERY
In its early days, GJO had a vision to produce electric vehicles for public fleets at the Oshawa facility, and hoped that these vehicles could be used by services like Canada Post or public transit systems. Then, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, GJO members saw other auto manufacturing plants in North America immediately retool to produce life-saving medical equipment and products.

“It came down to the fact that if they could build it in the States, they could build it here,” says Keetch, pointing to the GM facility in Warren, Michigan, which was quickly converted to manufacture masks. Seeing what was possible elsewhere, GJO issued the call for medical equipment to be produced in Oshawa and just six weeks later, the federal government signed a contract with GM to make 10 million surgical masks. By mid-July, workers in Oshawa had produced 1 million of them.

GJO’s vision brings to life the principles of a just recovery and a Green New Deal. We can use public funds and public powers to control the manufacturing industry in Canada to produce things our communities really need. We can ensure workers are paid fairly and treated with dignity and respect while making critical products that can help us through the multiple crises we’re facing. If we can break free from the idea that the only way to have a manufacturing sector is to let it be controlled by private corporations and billionaires, then we can work quickly to transform all kinds of public infrastructure and services to move us into a low-carbon economy – and we can create good jobs while we do it.

A GLIMPSE AT WHAT IS POSSIBLE
The short-term success of producing surgical masks was an important steppingstone in GJO’s larger vision. Because our understanding of COVID-19 transmission has evolved through the crisis, health care workers are demanding that policy makers use the precautionary principle and equip workers with a high level of personal protective equipment – beyond surgical masks and face shields. So GJO organizers have set their sights on their next goal: producing N95 face masks in Oshawa.
While the government has made some arrangements to improve the overall stock of personal protective equipment (PPE) in Canada, it’s not enough. These contracts are with private companies that continue to be driven by profit motives rather than public health. The contracts are also falling short. The federal government has ordered 154 million N95 respirators, but as of September 2020, had only received 61 million of them.

**WORKERS SUPPORT GREEN JOBS OSHAWA**

It’s no surprise this campaign is getting support from across the labour and climate justice movements. What GJO is proposing could help save lives of health care workers and others.

The rate of COVID-19 infection among health care workers in Canada is much higher than in other countries. According to the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, frontline health care providers like nurses and long-term care workers accounted for 16 per cent of Ontario’s COVID infections – a rate twice as high as China and 60 per cent higher than Italy. This is just one reason health care workers are calling for greater domestic manufacturing of and access to PPE.

GJO has garnered a broad base of support from organizations such as ours, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions and 350.org.

**GREEN NEW DEAL COMMUNITIES**

The Council of Canadians is proud to be supporting Green Jobs Oshawa through our Green New Deal Communities project. We’ve been able to help make connections across movements to boost support for GJO’s work, and we’re working with organizers on digital engagement strategies to promote their work even further.

Through our Green New Deal Communities project, we’re partnering with community organizers to support local campaigns like GJO that are rooted in Green New Deal principles and are building transformative changes at a local level. Like Rebecca Keetch said, “Articulating a vision that is bold and transformative is one of the most crucial and difficult components of the fight.” By providing direct support to local organizers, linking people together to create a network of inspiring local campaigns, and sharing stories like this more broadly, we want to inspire a bold and transformative vision for our collective futures.

To join the Green New Deal Communities project email greennewdeal@canadians.org. Visit canadians.org/greennewdeal to learn more. To learn more about Green Jobs Oshawa, visit greenjobsoshawa.ca.

**ROBIN TRESS IS A CLIMATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNER WITH THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS**

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**MAUDE BARLOW STEPS DOWN AS THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS’ HONORARY CHAIRPERSON**

On June 1, 2020, with deep gratitude and respect, the Council of Canadians’ Board of Directors announced Maude Barlow was stepping down from her position of Honorary Chairperson.

The Board expressed immense gratitude for all that Maude has contributed to the organization, right from the Council’s formation in 1985 to the present day. She provided unparalleled leadership, commitment and dedication to the Council of Canadians, its values and efforts to bring people together to drive progressive change.

“Maude Barlow is one of a kind. The wisdom, thoughtfulness and experience she has shared with the Council of Canadians over so many years cannot be matched,” said John Cartwright, Chairperson of the Council’s Board of Directors. “We are so thankful for her years of tireless dedication to fighting injustice and protecting the common good.”

“It has been the honour of my life to have served the Council of Canadians for over three decades and I know the Council will continue to fight for social justice for all,” said Maude.

The Council of Canadians’ board members, staff, chapter activists, members and supporters thank Maude for her tireless and inspiring work to make a better Canada – and a better world – possible.

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In the early days of the pandemic, the federal government was floating the idea of providing massive bailouts for Big Oil to gauge public support. With the help of our supporters, the Council of Canadians and others challenged this, arguing that a just recovery and fossil fuel bailouts are incompatible.

We exposed a secret memo for the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) that called on the government to suspend environmental laws and meet in secret.

The Trudeau government did back down significantly on what could have been a much larger bailout, but it has still funneled public funds to Big Oil instead of to a Green New Deal, a plan that results in a rapid, inclusive and far-reaching transition at all levels of government to slash climate emissions, meets the demands of the multiple crises we face, respects the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and creates more than 1 million jobs in the process.

Rather than relying entirely on direct bailouts to fossil fuel intensive sectors, the Trudeau government is using Crown corporations as stealthy tools for bailing out climate polluters, while avoiding the same degree of public scrutiny. Two key institutions in this strategy are Export Development Canada (EDC) and the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB).

This is on top of the annual bailouts, known as “fossil fuel subsidies,” which the federal government hands out to Big Oil corporations to the tune of $3.3 billion. The Trudeau government promised to stop these subsidies but hasn’t.

JUST RECOVERY VERSUS PRIVATIZATION
Privatization is a form of corporate bailout, wasting public funds often at the expense of climate action. Studies have shown that public-private partnerships (P3s) cost more and produce worse results. As the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) points out, “The Liberal government’s plans to funnel $10 billion in spending on sustainable projects through the Canada Infrastructure Bank ignores mounting evidence of the high costs of privatization.”

“The federal government can borrow money at historically low rates right now to support the green infrastructure needed to address climate change,” CUPE notes. “Instead, they are creating opportunities for corporations to profit from essential climate-related projects. CUPE research shows that using private sector financing could more than double total project costs, reducing infrastructure dollars available for the green transition.”

Meanwhile, since 2016, EDC has provided $45 billion in subsidies for financing fossil fuels compared to $7 billion on clean technology, which runs counter to the Trudeau government’s climate commitments.

THRONE SPEECH BIG ON PROMISES
In the throne speech last month, the Trudeau government pledged it would create 1 million jobs with climate action as the “cornerstone,” but what does that mean?

The speech also promised the government would “exceed Canada’s 2030 climate goal.” While more climate ambition is necessary, the government’s 2030 goal is barely half of what’s needed, so simply exceeding it is not nearly good enough. Canada’s commitment through the Paris climate agreement is 30 per cent emission reductions below 2005 levels by 2030. However, science and justice demand a reduction of at least 60 per cent domestically by 2030 plus substantial support for the Global South, which is being disproportionately impacted by the climate inaction of Western countries, including Canada.

This is why the government’s promise of net zero emissions by 2050 is caving to Big Oil. Many large fossil fuel corporations have also committed to net zero by 2050, but their commitment to reducing actual emissions remains questionable at best.

Instead of a bailout and special concessions for Big Oil, the government needs to prioritize transforming the economy in a way that supports and benefits workers and communities.

We need to take our first steps toward a Green New Deal with a just recovery from the pandemic, not bail out Big Oil.

DYLAN PENNER IS A CLIMATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNER WITH THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS
Since 1985, the Council of Canadians has been a home for people who believe a better Canada is not only possible, but necessary. The Council’s work has always been built on a strong foundation of timely and strategic campaigns for the values, social programs and progressive policies we all believe in – and it has been built with the grassroots support and action of people like you.

The Council’s work is funded almost entirely by your generous donations. Our independence as an organization is maintained by not accepting any money from corporations or governments. This independence allows us to speak out clearly and freely with a powerful, collective voice.

TAKING ACTION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
With a network of more than 50 volunteer chapters across Canada, in 2019 the Council of Canadians brought people together in communities across the country to protect water, build democracy, strengthen public health care, and demand climate justice. We stood up to the power of corporations. We worked in solidarity for Indigenous rights and pushed our governments to bridge the gaps caused by society’s inequalities.

There are many people who helped in these efforts in 2019, including our (former) Honorary Chairperson Maude Barlow, our national Board of Directors, our staff in Ottawa, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver, our chapter activists who put our campaigns and progressive issues into action, and of course, you, our committed members, donors and supporters, who make it all possible.

Here are just some of the positive changes you made possible in 2019:

YOU TURNED COMMUNITIES “BLUE”
The Council of Canadians’ Blue Communities Project gives people the tools they need to protect water at the local level. Thanks to your generous support, many more cities and communities turned “blue” in 2019, including Montreal, Los Angeles, Brussels and numerous cities and towns across Canada. They did so by supporting the human right to water, affirming their commitment to provide public water and wastewater services, and banning the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities. Your support got materials into the hands of people in communities across Canada and around the world who raised awareness about the need for water to stay in public hands. It also got youth involved – students in Quebec and Ottawa began their journeys to become “Blue Schools” through this initiative. All of this incredible work was then put in the spotlight as Maude Barlow launched her book, Whose Water is it, Anyway?, in communities across the country.

YOU PROTECTED WATER AND SAID “NO” TO NESTLÉ
You challenged the privatization of the Commons – resources like water that belong to all and shouldn’t be
YOU MADE CUSMA – THE NEW NAFTA – BETTER FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

When U.S. President Donald Trump tried to strongarm Canada into revising the North American Free Trade Agreement in the U.S.’s favour, you made sure people across the country had crucial and up-to-date information about the deal and its impacts. Tens of thousands of Council of Canadians supporters lobbied their MP for significant changes in the agreement through petitions, phone calls and letters. As a result, dangerous provisions that allowed corporations to sue our government for policies and regulations that infringed on their investments – even if they were enacted to protect people’s health or the environment – were dropped. You ensured the removal of NAFTA’s energy proportionality rules that required Canada to send a fixed amount of energy south of our border to the U.S. You raised import questions about new market access, and pressured governments to stop giving away our water to this multinational water corporation.

YOU OPPOSED THE GOVERNMENT’S “BILLION DOLLAR BUYOUT”

On June 18, 2019, less than 24 hours after declaring a climate emergency, the Canadian government approved the climate-killing Trans Mountain pipeline. When Kinder Morgan wavered on building it, the Trudeau government used taxpayer dollars to buy it. Through all of this, Council of Canadians supporters have been on the frontlines of the fight to stop this pipeline. You organized rallies and protests outside of MPs offices, you delivered copies of the Council of Canadians’ hard-hitting research report Billion Dollar Buyout: How Canadian taxpayers bought a climate-killing pipeline and Trump’s trade deal supports it, and you kept a spotlight on the urgent need to transition to a low carbon future.

YOU SAID OFFSHORE DRILLING IS NOT WITH THE RISK

Despite the well-documented need to rapidly move toward a renewable energy future, provincial and federal governments are continuing to support exploration for offshore oil and gas in Nova Scotian waters. Council of Canadians’ Atlantic chapters are leading the efforts to protect coastal waters and stop this risky extraction process. Council chapters held rallies, information meetings, and helped increase the political pressure for a full public inquiry on the risks of offshore drilling. You amplified their efforts through letters and a petition that has garnered more than 60,000 signatures to date, saying offshore drilling is not worth the risk.

YOU BUILT GRASSROOTS SUPPORT FOR A GREEN NEW DEAL IN CANADA

We are living in a global climate crisis. Scientists have given us under a decade to cut our emissions in half in order to avoid catastrophic impacts and the crisis moving beyond our control. To do that, we must see “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.” You are part of a global movement for a Green New Deal that provides a just transition, led by the federal government, to slash emissions, meet the demands of the multiple crises we face, respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and create over 1 million jobs in the process. It is a proposal that is gaining in popularity among people and groups from all walks of life, especially young people who know their futures are at stake. You took part in cross-country townhalls, wrote letters of support, and helped build momentum for a Green New Deal from the grassroots up. Now, more than ever, it is essential to build a new economy that places power in the hands of people, not corporations, and protects the environment so we all have a livable future.

YOU MADE THE CASE FOR PHARMACARE

Before COVID-19 hit, one in four Canadians could not afford their medications. With the high number of job losses, this number is expected grow. Throughout the Council’s history, you have been part of the ongoing efforts to make a national pharmacare program part of...
Canada’s medicare system, giving everyone access to the medications they need without the barrier of cost. Council of Canadians’ chapters across the country are fighting for strengthened public health care in their communities. With your support, we enhanced their efforts by delivering hard-hitting reports, lobbying MPs and educating the public on how pharmacare would not only give people access to needed prescription drugs, it would save all of us a lot of money through the bulk purchase of medications. Together, we will make pharmacare a reality.

**YOU STOOD IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**
The Council of Canadians works in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples. You amplified calls to respect Indigenous rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. You attended rallies against the Coastal GasLink pipeline project and the Trans Mountain pipeline which threaten Indigenous People’s right to free, prior and informed consent. You supported efforts of grassroots Mi’kmaq water protectors to stop the Alton Gas natural gas storage project in Nova Scotia which threatens the Shubenacadie River. You supported the calls of Grassy Narrows First Nation in their fight for remedial action and funding for the health challenges in their community caused by mercury poisoning. You joined with Indigenous Peoples in their call for true reconciliation.

**YOU FOUGHT TO STOP CLIMATE CHANGE**
Our world is warming too fast and scientists are clear that we need to change direction to stop irreversible damage to our planet by climate change. Thanks to you, we took many actions throughout the year to educate, raise awareness, and put pressure on politicians to act. Our chapters and activists joined with youth to take to the streets for Fridays for Future rallies, amplifying youths’ calls to governments for urgent action in the growing face of climate change.

Your donations allowed us to support a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s case against the federal carbon pricing plan, arguing that it must be upheld as constitutional. While Trudeau’s carbon pricing policy, and wider climate plan, fall well below what is needed, we intervened because we believe governments at all levels need to coordinate to pursue ambitious and equitable climate policy. A ruling that allows a provincial government to opt out of a federal climate plan would set a legal precedent we cannot afford. You helped us say “Reject Teck” and your support allowed us to speak as an intervenor in hearings on what would have been the largest tar sands mine to date. Your support made a difference – Teck Resources abandoned its plans for the mine in early 2020.

**THANK YOU**
With your support, the Council of Canadians garnered hundreds of media hits, organized major events in communities across Canada and around the world, held conferences and speaking tours, produced educational materials and reports, provided daily updates on our website at canadians.org and on social media, and delivered informative articles in Canadian Perspectives.

These remarkable achievements are made possible by your financial contributions. More than $3.6 million was received from supporter donations this fiscal year, which represents 95 per cent of total revenue. Please see the Summary Statement of Revenue and Expenses which shows our sources of revenue and how we spent this funding.

We extend a most heartfelt thank you to all of you, our donors, for supporting this work!

**THE CITIZEN’S AGENDA FUND**
The Council of Canadians would like to extend a special thank you to everyone who donated to our Citizens’ Agenda Fund (CAF). These leadership-level contributions made it possible to achieve many campaign victories in 2019.
We're so deeply grateful to every single one of you, our donors and Members, for your steadfast support through this difficult year. Thank you!

Like many not-for-profit organizations, the Council of Canadians hasn’t been immune to the impact COVID-19 has had on donations. We’ve had to do more with less, adapting and innovating in order to continue carrying out our vital public advocacy work, which is urgently needed right now.

The truth is we need your help to hit our fundraising goal. We don’t accept donations from governments or corporations, so we only have you to turn to. If you’re able to, please mail back your special year-end donation. Every little bit helps!

Your donation always makes a big difference – building people power to hold governments at all levels to account, stand up to corporate power, and advocate for the clean water, climate action, strengthened public health care, fair trade, Indigenous rights and vibrant democracy we all want and know are needed.

And right now, we have the greatest opportunity in generations to bring about transformative change on these fronts and more.

Please use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to mail back your donation with this form. Thank you for your support!

Here’s my special year-end donation

☐ $20  ☐ $50  ☐ $100  ☐ $300  ☐ $500  ☐ My choice $ ______

☐ Make this a monthly donation $ ____________

☐ I want to be a Member of the Council of Canadians

☐ Enclosed is my cheque made out to The Council of Canadians. (Please use the enclosed postage-paid envelope)

OR

☐ Please charge my credit card: Visa / Mastercard / Amex

Card # ____________________________

Expiry date (MM/YY) ____________

Name on card (please print) ____________________________

Signature ____________________________

Email address ____________________________

Phone number ____________________________

You can also donate by phone at 1-800-387-7177 or online at canadians.org. Due to the Council’s political advocacy work donations are not tax deductible.
To mark a lifetime of standing up for social justice, protecting the environment, and fighting to build a more equitable and compassionate world, many Council of Canadians supporters have chosen to plan a legacy gift in their will.

A legacy gift affords you the opportunity to make a lasting statement about what matters to you with a contribution to a cause close to your heart. It’s the ultimate donation that aligns your personal values with your philanthropic goals.

Whether it’s a bequest arranged in your will or a life insurance policy that is no longer needed, a legacy gift to the Council is a simple yet profoundly meaningful way you can assist an organization that shares your values and beliefs and will work to uphold them for the benefit of future generations.

That was Olive Wells’ motivation for planning her legacy gift to the Council of Canadians. Her daughter, Joyce, is also a passionate Council member and shared with us why both she and her mother decided to plan legacy gifts for the Council.

“If you had known my mom, you would have liked her very much. She was born to prairie settlers near Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and spent her life on the farm. When my dad went to fight in World War II, she both taught school and ran our wheat farm. She went on to be a founding organizer of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation. When she retired from teaching, she held the record as the longest-serving teacher in Saskatchewan history.

My parents were both progressive people and big supporters of Tommy Douglas. My mom cared deeply about medicare, universal education and the environment – along with a host of other issues. She had a very clear circle of care in her mind and heart. Family first, farm second, community third, then province, country and world.

Before she died, she planned a gift in her will to the Council of Canadians. She had two principal reasons for doing so. First, the Council fights for the issues that my mom cared about so deeply. It represents a vision of Canada that she wanted for her students, their children and their grandchildren. Secondly, she admired Maude Barlow as a sister pioneer who commanded attention and respect in rooms full of men.

I too have planned a legacy gift for the Council in my will for many of the same reasons.

My mom thought of herself as a simple woman who just lived her life as she ought to live it. But what a life! I am so proud to be her daughter. I’m proud to follow in her footsteps as a progressive Canadian and member of the Council of Canadians.”

Joyce Wells, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan

Olive’s legacy gift went on to directly support and advance the Council’s advocacy work on the same issues she so passionately believed in life. We’re honoured and grateful to both Olive and Joyce for their generosity and passion.

Have you considered planning a legacy gift to the Council to ensure your activism carries on? With just a few lines added to your will, you can drive transformative change beyond your lifetime and shape the kind of Canada and world our children and grandchildren will inherit.

To request no-hassle information on legacy giving, including our helpful guide, simply complete the form below, then detach and mail it back to us in the postage-paid envelope enclosed in this issue of Canadian Perspectives.

And if you’ve already planned a legacy gift for the Council, please let us know so we can thank you!

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Request information on how to plan your legacy gift

☐ Yes, please send me information on planning a legacy gift for the Council of Canadians.

☐ I have already arranged a legacy gift for the Council of Canadians.

Name (please print) ________________________________

Address _________________________________________

________________________________________________

Email ___________________________________________

Phone __________________________________________

You can also call Hélène Bertrand, Major Gifts and Legacy Giving Officer, at 1-800-387-7177, ext 244 or email her at hbertrand@canadians.org for assistance.
At the end of July, the Ontario government quietly released a study on staffing in long-term care. The government-initiated report recognizes “the critical importance of staffing in long-term care homes” and says the government must “urgently address the staffing crisis in long-term care, make long-term care homes a better place to live and work, and implement staffing approaches that reflect and respond to the complexity of the sector and diverse resident needs.”

The study was produced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which to date has led to the deaths of more than 1,800 seniors in long-term care homes in Ontario and more than 9,000 across Canada, according to data compiled by independent journalist Nora Loreto.

COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care homes continue to this day across the country.

Earlier this year, the Council of Canadians launched a campaign to raise awareness and build support for the crucial changes needed in long-term care homes across the country as part of our ongoing campaign for strengthened public health care. We called for immediate and urgent action, including for the federal government to work with national and territorial governments on a national strategy that includes national standards of care, eliminating the for-profit motives in long-term care and bringing homes into public hands under the same principles as the Canada Health Act, and providing the resources and support that workers in long-term care homes need.

Canada’s shameful record of COVID fatalities in long-term care is the highest of all developed country in the world. A report by the Canadian Institute of Health Information found that “the proportion of deaths occurring in long-term care (LTC) is double the OECD average.” It is a national tragedy that cannot be ignored, especially as the threat of more COVID-19 infections looms.

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD LISTEN TO WORKERS

Long-term care workers across the country have cited staffing shortages as a key contributor to the high number of deaths in long-term care homes – the staffing crisis was identified long before COVID-19 emerged in Canada, particularly in Ontario. What is happening in Ontario provides an example of why we need a coordinated national strategy on long-term care.

Workers in long-term care homes have unique insights on what is needed to avoid additional tragedies. Governments should be listening to their experiences closely – not to the managers or the corporate faces representing the homes – but to the people who work and provide care in the homes. (And whenever possible, they should listen to the people who live in them too).
With so many lives lost and more in the balance as the second wave of COVID-19 hits, the health and safety of residents and workers in long-term care should be a top priority issue for all provincial and territorial governments. Shockingly, in Ontario, it hasn’t been.

In late September, three unions – CUPE, SEIU and Unifor – representing long-term care workers, held a press conference asking why the Ford government has failed to act on its own report on staffing in homes. Months passed since the report was issued, and to this day, the staffing crisis in many of Ontario’s long-term care homes continues.

Personal support workers (PSWs) at the press conference spoke of the stress of their jobs – stress that has been there for many years – of not having enough time to properly care for residents and constantly feeling rushed. Now they have the added fears of residents dying and of contracting COVID-19 themselves and infecting others, including their families at home. As a result, many are leaving these often part-time, precarious positions.

To control infection, measures such as frequent handwashing and changing personal protective equipment (if any was supplied) were added into their already impossible workloads. The workers spoke of the fear of reprisal from their employers for speaking out.

**TERRIFYING WORKING CONDITIONS**

Jen Cloutier, a PSW who works in a long-term care home in Windsor, fought back tears as she spoke about her working conditions.

“To work through the pandemic is terrifying... is exhausting... is emotional. And to go to work every day to see your residents dying? It’s a horrible way to work,” she said. “We were as little as three to four staff in a four-hour period. How do you keep residents alive with three to four staff when I’ve worked a 20-hour shift and I don’t even have time to get hydration or nutrition for myself? Mental breakdowns, depression, vomiting in cars and locker rooms happen daily in my (long-term care) home, and I’m sure in many other homes.”

A coalition of long-term care stakeholders wrote to Premier Ford, warning they were not equipped to handle a second wave of COVID-19. Since June, they have asked the province for help addressing the staffing shortages and infection prevention and control deficiencies in homes.

Thankfully, in September there was a glimmer of hope - and it came from the federal government.

In the throne speech, the Trudeau government acknowledged that “one of the greatest tragedies of this pandemic is the lives lost in long-term care homes. Elders deserve to be safe, respected, and live in dignity.”

The Trudeau government pledged to work with provinces and territories and to “explicitly penalize those who neglect seniors under their care, putting them in danger.”

Most importantly, it promised to “work with the provinces and territories to set new, national standards for long-term care so that seniors get the best support possible” and “will look at further targeted measures for personal support workers, who do an essential service helping the most vulnerable in our communities. Canada must better value their work and their contributions to our society.”

Those new national standards for long-term care should mean a minimum of four hours of care per resident. We also need a mechanism that removes the profit motives from long-term care, especially when studies show that people are more likely to contract COVID-19 and die from it in for-profit homes.

We must work together from coast-to-coast-to-coast to improve long-term care for everyone. This is a national crisis that needs our national attention. Now it’s up to all of us to hold the Trudeau government to its promises.

You can keep up the pressure on the federal government by signing the Council’s petition at canadians.org/action/long-term-care that calls on the federal government to bring long-term homes into public hands, provide a coordinated seniors’ care strategy to be implemented in all provinces and territories, and ensure all long-term care workers have all the support, tools and equipment they need to stay safe.

**JAN MALEK IS THE PUBLICATIONS OFFICER AT THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS**
From June to September, Council of Canadians Montreal Chapter activist Pierre Madden worked in a centre d’hébergement et de soins de longue durée (CHSLD – Quebec’s version of a long-term care home). The following are translated excerpts from the journal he kept over that period. More than 2,000 people have died from COVID-19 in CHSLDs in Quebec since the start of the pandemic.

DAY ONE AT CHSLD: ORIENTATION AND TRAINING
I find out that the food service is due to close soon. Staff will be reduced from eight to two and all meals will be prepared in the big hospital where a new kitchen is being built. If Mrs. Gagnon wants an extra yogurt on her tray, we won’t be able to accommodate her request. “Sorry, ma’am, this is a home environment, not a convenience store.”

On an In Memoriam board there are 43 photos; most of the people died because of COVID-19. This is out of 128 residents, since March 16, 12 weeks ago.

DAY 5: REPLACING THE MISSING
Today the newcomers are starting to arrive. One wonders who would want to go to a CHSLD with all the bad publicity they have received. I guess there are even worse experiences in life.

The staff is worried about this wave of new arrivals. Each admission requires a lot of work. Fifty at once is a heavy load. Service assistants like me can offer little help.

DAY 7: THE CORONER GETS INVOLVED
The coroner’s inquest will focus on deaths of a “violent, obscure nature or because they may have been caused by negligence.” The coroner’s office says: “We don’t have to rule on civil or criminal liability. We don’t assign blame or charge anyone with negligence.” You have to identify negligence without assigning blame.

Neglect has innumerable relatives. It’s a real team effort, where everyone remains humble and denies any claim to responsibility or contribution, however small.

I can tell you right away what the investigation will show: the causes of neglect are many. Responsibility (but not blame) will be attributed to the current government, the previous governments, the opposition parties, civil servants, regional and local administrators, unions, frontline workers, insufficient budgets, sufficient budgets that are poorly managed, and let us not forget the residents themselves, who neglected to sound the alarm loud enough or, in some cases, simply died without saying a word.

All these nice people were busy elsewhere when the crisis struck. The truth is that we are always doing something else when tragedy strikes.

DAY 9: DISINFECT THE HINGES
My task today is to disinfect the ironworks that fix the handrails to the wall. Who thought of that? How could you suspect that it wasn’t already being done?

Disinfecting is repetitive and boring work. Yet you have to concentrate to remember where you are and what surfaces of your rag have been used. When your rag gets stuck and loses its neat, rectangular geometry and gets tangled up in a heap, how can you tell which surfaces are clean and which aren’t?

There is a lot of time to think and little incentive to be interested.

DAY 34: PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?
“The Ombudsman is aware that a private CHSLD must generate profits. However, this objective cannot be achieved at the expense of the CHSLD’s true mission, which is to meet and adapt to the needs of elderly people losing their autonomy,” states a 2017 government report.

Think about it: will a CHSLD that does not make a profit continue to operate because their real mission is the well-being of the residents? Will another owner who makes considerable profits and neglects the care and health of the residents shut down because they fail to achieve their true mission?

To accept that the private CHSLD must generate profits is to recognize that profits take precedence over the quality of life of our elderly parents. They are subject to the laws of the market. A portion of the funds that we devote to them is used to enrich shareholders who contribute nothing to the operation of the residence.

Does that make sense to you?

For more information about how to join a chapter in your area, visit our website at canadians.org/chapters or call us toll-free at 1-800-387-7177.
Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Council of Canadians’ chapter activists continue to be busy protecting water and public health care, calling for urgent and immediate action on climate change and standing up for democracy. Here are just a few examples of their recent actions:

**SOUTH SHORE CHAPTER CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY**
This fall, the South Shore Chapter celebrated 20 years of grassroots activism in Nova Scotia. Chapter members have been a consistent presence and voice for justice in Nova Scotia, inspiring many people to take action in their community and beyond. The chapter has had many successes over the years, including getting municipal governments to call for a moratorium and inquiry on offshore drilling, banning fracking, stopping dangerous aquaculture and forestry projects, increasing voter turnout, banning uranium mining and exploration, making Lunenburg a Blue Community, and more. We extend our sincere thanks and congratulations to past and present chapter members for all of their efforts!

**REVEALING THE DANGERS OF LNG**
The Delta-Richmond chapter in B.C. has been helping to build public awareness about the Tilbury liquified natural gas (LNG) plant expansion project, which would impact local air quality and the Fraser River. The chapter joined the BC LNG Network and worked with allied groups to host an Alternative Open House to counter virtual open houses put on by the LNG proponent, FortisBC. LNG has also been a primary focus within the Comox Valley Chapter. Chapter member Alice de Wolff recently co-edited the book All Fracked Up, which looks at the ballooning risks and costs to British Columbians of fracking and LNG in the province.

**A MASSIVE WIN FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CARE**
In September, B.C.’s Supreme Court struck down a Charter challenge against public health care. Launched by private clinic owner Dr. Brian Day, the case was a direct threat to Canada’s publicly funded medicare system. The case pitted Dr. Day, owner of the private Cambie Surgeries Corp. – a corporation that allows people to pay for access to surgeries – against the British Columbia government. The Canadian government, supporters of public health care and patients also joined the suit. Through our B.C.-based chapters and coalition work, the Council supported the intervenors in this case as part of our commitment to strengthened public health care.

**OFFSHORE DRILLING IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**
The Avalon (formerly St. John’s) chapter has been working with allies to push the provincial government to invest in low-carbon industries in order to recover from the economic and climate crises, rather than continuing to rely so heavily on the offshore oil and gas industry. The industry has a chaotic boom and bust cycle that makes investment in public services and infrastructure difficult, and the provincial budget has already been decimated by the boondoggle of Muskrat Falls hydro dam. The Avalon chapter sent a letter to Liberal party leadership hopefuls and to then Premier-designate Andrew Furey, it played a role in a national sign-on letter opposing corporate bailouts and has spoken with media and reached out to local Council of Canadians members on this issue.

To read more about how chapters are taking action for people, the planet and democracy in communities across the country visit canadians.org/chapters.
On July 2, Nestlé announced it was selling its bottled water business in Canada to another huge water bottler, Ice River Springs.

At the time, we viewed this as an indication of success in our long campaign against bottled water – and against Nestlé in particular. For more than a decade, Council of Canadians chapters and supporters, First Nations and other community groups have been raising awareness and speaking out against Nestlé’s water profiting business. We have called on people to boycott Nestlé products, demanded better regulations, and engaged tens of thousands of people in conversations about water commodification and why we must keep water public and protected. It was a hard-fought victory to see Nestlé leave Canada. Unfortunately, it was one that was short-lived.

In a surprise announcement in early September, Nestlé said the sale to Ice River was off, citing delays in getting regulatory approval from the Competition Bureau. Coincidentally (perhaps), just a few days earlier, the government of Ontario announced it would extend a four-year-old moratorium against issuing new bottled water taking permits – this time, until April 2021.

Disappointingly, this is the third time the moratorium has been extended. Tens of thousands of Council of Canadians supporters have called on the Ontario government to make this moratorium permanent, to phase out all existing permits, and to give communities a real say in decisions affecting their local groundwater.

NEW REGULATIONS
In early October, the Ontario government proposed additional regulations that require bottled water corporations seeking permits to get approval from the local municipality first, giving communities the right to simply refuse. The details of how this will be implemented are not clear yet and there are some substantial loopholes in the proposal. Still, this is a remarkable development and a direct result of fierce and persistent community opposition.

One loophole is that municipalities will only have the right to refuse a new or expanded bottled water permit for quantities greater than 379,000 litres of groundwater extraction per day. This is an arbitrary number that does not take into account the different situations each municipality faces when planning for future water takings and population growth. It also could result in multiple permits being issued for quantities just under that limit.

The other glaring weakness in the proposed changes is that municipal approvals would be irrevocable for five years. This encourages backroom dealings and lobbying by deep-pocketed corporations. It also disenfranchises the community since voting out a municipal council that gave an approval will not stop the permit application from moving forward.

Given how quickly our climate is changing and the pressures these changes are putting on groundwater supplies everywhere, municipalities should be able to revoke their support for water-takings at any time. This would also give municipalities some power to compel bottled water companies to honour any promises they make in exchange for municipal approvals including local job creation and other community investments.

Corporations like Nestlé take our water, what should be a shared public resource, put it in environmentally damaging single-use plastic bottles, and sell it for massive profits. Both Ontario and B.C. are battlegrounds to stop Nestlé’s water grab – and we are keeping up the fight.

The most powerful force against the commodification of water is an informed and organized network of people who are committed to safeguarding water. Your support continues to make all the difference.

MARK CALZAVARA IS THE ONTARIO-QUEBEC REGIONAL ORGANIZER FOR THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS
For years, the Council of Canadians has been calling for a modernization of federal water policies, including the establishment of the Ministry of Water to coordinate water protection, management and stewardship.

In the 2019 federal election, the Liberals committed to establishing the Canada Water Agency with a promise it would “keep our water safe, clean and well-managed.” Since the election, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have been tasked with creating the agency. MP Terry Duguid of Winnipeg South is overseeing the process.

We urgently need the Canada Water Agency. The agency must play a key role in implementing the human right to water and sanitation at the federal level, strengthen freshwater protection legislation, increase collaboration and coordination across federal agencies and jurisdictions, and exemplify the process of co-development of policies with Indigenous Peoples. We have identified the gaps in science, data, policy and programs and proposed ways the Canada Water Agency could address these gaps in a submission we sent in on behalf of Council members and supporters like you.

IMPLEMENTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION
The UN recognized the human right to water and sanitation in 2010, and Canada signed onto the global consensus in 2012. However, to date, there has been no framework or legislation to implement these rights in Canada. In the absence of federal leadership, Northwest Territories and Quebec are the only governments that have enshrined the right to water in their legislation.

More than 30 municipalities have affirmed the rights to water and sanitation as part of the Council of Canadians’ Blue Communities Project. The soon-to-be-created Canada Water Agency could play a significant role in the implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation by enshrining in legislation the government’s commitment to respect, protect and fulfill these rights, and focus resources to implement them.

Right now, more than 100 First Nations communities still live without access to safe, clean drinking water and adequate sanitation. The federal government has committed to ending all long-term drinking water advisories by March 2021, but as reported by Indigenous Services Canada, progress has been slow and does not fully reflect the full reality of water access in First Nations communities. Federal investments have been insufficient, and communities must navigate bureaucratic hurdles, band-aid solutions and the lack of funding for long-term maintenance, operations and training. This has led to many drinking water advisories being re-instated after they are initially lifted.

Providing safe, clean drinking water to First Nations on reserves is an urgent first step in repairing the damage of past and present colonial governments.
DANGEROUS LEVELS OF LEAD IN OUR WATER

Last year, investigative reporting revealed dangerously high levels of lead in drinking water in municipalities across Canada due to antiquated infrastructure and varied drinking water standards across provinces. Decades of inadequate federal standards and the underfunding of public infrastructure has resulted in this massive public health crisis.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimates that municipalities need $50 billion to upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure in poor or very poor conditions. Meanwhile, municipalities are forced to consider water public-private partnerships (P3s). Experience has shown that P3s cost more, delivers less and removes community accountability control compared to public ownership.

The Canada Water Agency could harmonize the patchwork of drinking water standards across provinces, enforce new standards, and guarantee funding for communities to repair and upgrade their water and wastewater infrastructure. Federal investments in water infrastructure, especially public funding like the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, must be renewed and expanded, while false solutions that promote privatization and P3s, like the Canada Infrastructure Bank, must be rejected.

STRENGTHENING FRESHWATER PROTECTION REGULATIONS

The former Harper Conservative government slashed legislative protections of 99 per cent of lakes and rivers. In their last term, the Liberal government partially restored protections for waterways through the new Canada Navigable Waters Act and Impact Assessment Act, but did not remove exemptions for major fossil fuel projects like pipelines and power lines. The new legislation also fails to require free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous communities as required by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Meanwhile, Schedule 2 of the Fisheries Act still allows industries to turn freshwater bodies into tailings impoundment areas (tailings ponds).

Upholding and implementing the human rights to water and sanitation means protecting water at its source. The federal government must close the loopholes in the Canada Navigable Waters Act, Impact Assessment Act and Fisheries Act to fully protect every waterway, while committing to respecting Indigenous water rights, titles, governance structure and law.

More than 20 federal departments, as well as the provinces, regulate various aspects of water including water quality, quantity, access, withdrawals, etc. Water taking permits, for example, are regulated provincially, but the impact of water extraction on fish habitat or biodiversity is a federal matter.

The Canada Water Agency has an opportunity to modernize the fragmented approach currently applied to water management across jurisdictions and facilitate a shift towards water protection and management as a shared Commons, a shared resource that is available to all.

PROTECT WATER FROM MAJOR ENERGY PROJECTS

Major energy projects continue to be one of the largest threats to water, the climate and Indigenous rights. Fracking, mega-hydro dams, tar sands extractions, coal mines and other energy projects can be both water intensive and detrimental to the local watershed, the downstream environment and communities. Pipelines like Trans Mountain and Coastal GasLink threaten thousands of waterways, disrupt the way of life of Indigenous communities along their paths and contributed to the worsening climate crisis. Meanwhile, these extractive industries aggressively lobby all levels of government to weaken environmental monitoring regulations.

To meet its Paris Agreement target, Canada must reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent by 2030. To do this, the expansion and continued operation of these fossil fuel projects that also put water at risk cannot continue. As the Canada Water Agency modernizes the approach and policies around water, it must incorporate climate change impacts into its review and strengthen regulations to safeguard water from these projects.

Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, requires millions of litres of water (and mixes it with chemicals including known carcinogens and sand) to fracture shale rock underground and force natural gas to escape. Where the industry has been allowed to go ahead, fracking projects have contaminated local groundwater sources, devastating the environment in their wake. Council of Canadians chapters have worked hard to achieve fracking moratoriums in several provinces, and the Council of Canadians is now calling on the Canada Water Agency to push for federal legislation to reject these destructive projects.

The Canada Water Agency presents an opportunity to modernize the federal approach to water policy, ensuring that it centers Indigenous rights and community interests. The agency can protect water as a human right, public trust and shared commons.

Have your say! Environment and Climate Change Canada has opened an online consultation to get public input on the mandate of the Canada Water Agency. Submissions to this consultation process can be made on the online platform PlaceSpeak, or by emailing ec.water-eau.ec@canada.ca. Communities and individuals have until May 31, 2021 to provide input.

VI BUI IS THE WATER CAMPAIGNER FOR THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS
July 28, 2020 marked a significant milestone in the fight to protect water. On that day 10 years ago, the United Nations General Assembly recognized water and sanitation as fundamental human rights.

Canada joined this international consensus in 2012, however, successive federal governments have failed to provide a framework or legislation to implement or enforce these rights. COVID-19 has made it even clearer that universal access to safe, clean water and adequate sanitation must be a reality to all.

The Council of Canadians has been integral in the advocacy at the international level to recognize the right to water and is working with water justice activists and communities across Canada and around the world to realize this right. With the help of Council chapters and supporters, we have been working to hold the federal government accountable to its commitment to end drinking water advisories by 2021, many communities are still on drinking water advisories while having to navigate government bureaucracy, band-aid solutions and inadequate funding for training, operations and maintenance.

**DANGEROUS LEVELS OF LEAD**

Last year, reports of dangerous quantities of lead in drinking water across major Canadian cities shone a spotlight on Canada’s aging water infrastructure and the uneven patchwork of drinking water standards across provinces. Meanwhile, municipalities and Indigenous communities are struggling to secure adequate funding to maintain and upgrade their water and wastewater infrastructure or services, many resorting to inefficient, costly and flawed public-private partnerships to fund their projects. The federal government, while having made encouraging investments in water infrastructure and services, is promoting water privatization through the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

Ten years after the UN recognized the human rights to water and sanitation and eight years after Canada did, it’s time we fully implement this right at all levels of government. The federal government can take a leadership role by focusing its policies and resources to enshrine the human rights to water and sanitation into legislation. This means making sufficient investments to address the drinking water crisis in First Nations, putting in place and enforcing national drinking water standards, providing public funding for communities to repair and upgrade their water and sewage infrastructure and services, and working across jurisdictions to protect Canada’s freshwater.

At the same time, the federal government must respect Indigenous rights and develop water policies with Indigenous nations as equal partners. These policies must uphold Indigenous titles, governance structure and law.

We are proud to stand alongside Council of Canadians’ members and supporters as we continue to protect every community’s right to access safe, clean drinking water and adequate sanitation.

Moving forward, we will build grassroots power and work with our chapters and allies to push for the implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation at the federal level. At the same time, we will continue to expand the network of communities committed to protecting water as a human right and commons across Canada and around the world through our Blue Communities Project.

We look forward to working with you all to make universal access to water and sanitation a reality.

**VI BUI** IS THE WATER CAMPAIGNER FOR THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS
COVID-19 has revealed weaknesses in our health care system, long-term care, food and water systems and social safety nets. It has also revealed incredible weaknesses in globalized trade.

Wrecking economies and livelihoods, the COVID-19 crisis has ground travel almost to a halt and put a large dent in international trade, so much so that the World Trade Organization predicts that trade will decline in 2020 by 13 to 32 per cent. As the crisis unravels international supply chains, the pandemic has shed light on another global failure: the failure of our global trade rules to encourage international cooperation and, more importantly, to prevent and combat the virus.

It shouldn’t be like this. As travel and trade increase in normal times, so does our exposure to pandemics. Business travel, international trade and tourism accelerate the spread of viruses.

Like many previous pandemics, COVID-19 is the product of international trade. Colonial-era trade, the mass deportation of African slaves to the Americas, the Silk Road – these all exported viruses and diseases worldwide.

While international trade aids the spread of viruses like COVID-19, it also undermines our ability to prevent and fight them. Trade agreements in their current form undermine health and safety systems, public health care systems, and the regulations we rely on to keep us safe. Focusing on rules to facilitate, streamline and standardize trade, these agreements offer little to deal with the social or environmental fallout of international trade.

One example of this is our shortage of N95 masks. We agreed to trade rules that facilitated the manufacturing of these masks to other countries, including the U.S. and Mexico. In April, U.S. President Donald Trump halted respirator mask exports amidst a dispute with 3M. Meanwhile, millions of face masks from other foreign countries failed to meet Canadian quality standards and couldn’t be used by frontline workers. We have had to find new ways to get these urgently needed masks. Plans to produce these masks under public initiatives are now underway. (Read more about this on pages 5 and 6.)

Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions in trade agreements, which give corporations the right to sue governments, are problematic. While ISDS provisions may have been removed from the new NAFTA agreement, they still exist in many other deals. Under NAFTA, this has made us the most sued developed country in the world as corporations attack our environment and public safety regulations.

When Italy was at the peak of its COVID crisis, with doctors deciding who would get a ventilator and who wouldn’t, international trade lawyers were discussing how Italy’s restrictions could be challenged by ISDS. Peru has already received subtle threats from lawyers and reversed some of its COVID-19-related measures because of ISDS.

This is why the Council of Canadians, and more than 600 organizations around the world, are asking for a moratorium on ISDS during COVID.

In trade agreements, corporations also are given tools to challenge regulations to make them business friendly. Known as “regulatory cooperation,” these rules allow companies – not elected politicians – to discuss rules and challenge them, which can result in weakened protections.

Trade agreements also accelerate privatization and attack public services. Private long-term care homes are an example. Some provinces have allowed care in these homes to be offered by private, for-profit corporations when the services they provide should be publicly sourced. Trade agreements stipulate that governments can privatize public services, but they cannot bring back services into the public sector.

Right now, with COVID-19 still spreading globally, inequalities and injustices are becoming more apparent. We are asking for fundamental changes to our economies and our societies in order to quell not only this crisis, but the environmental and social crises of global inequality. In order to be successful, we must overhaul trade agreements.

This text is an adaptation of an article that will soon be published in an anthology by Fernwood Publishing.
The COVID-19 global pandemic has shown that our society is only as healthy as its most vulnerable members. We all need access to comprehensive public health care – and to achieve this we need a national pharmacare program.

Our age, employment, income and location should not determine our ability to access the prescription medicines we need. This is becoming even more urgent during the COVID-19 pandemic as people lose jobs with employer-paid benefit plans.

In the recent throne speech, the Trudeau government committed (again) to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Council on National Pharmacare and to start negotiations with provinces to make a national pharmacare program a reality.

Thousands of Canadians are forced to choose each month between buying food and paying for medication. Before the pandemic, it was estimated that one in 10 people could not afford the medications they need to stay healthy. Some people are cutting their pills to be able to stretch each prescription longer.

When the pandemic hit, these numbers increased.

Universal pharmacare will lessen the burden on the health system by ensuring people don’t end up at the emergency room just because they ran out of necessary medication.

Earlier this year, we did a survey of Council of Canadians supporters to learn more about their experiences with getting the medications they need. Here are a few stories we heard:

“I now have to choose between losing our house or getting medication. Going without may cause my condition to flare up which renders me completely bedridden so I will then lose my job.”
Anonymous

“I’m very lucky that the employer that laid me off is willing to pay for three months of coverage before my end date. I know this is not the case for many. If that coverage and the CERB both run out and I am still not working, we will have to budget very carefully.”
Anonymous

“I am a diabetic on insulin, explaining some of our high costs. In 2019, my spouse was diagnosed with cancer, and we have faced a heavy pharmaceutical cost because of that. In total, our needs cost us close to $500 a month.”
Anonymous, retired

“While I have coverage now, for over a decade I did not while I was trying to get multiple health issues under control and needed medications to be a crucial part of that. I may have been able to re-enter the workforce much sooner if I had coverage.”
Chris Aucoin, currently employed

“Between my husband and myself, we spent over $1,000 per year on our prescription medications.”
- Diana Lanctot, retired

“I was told that I would be a good candidate for immunotherapy. The cost per injection would be $1,000. My husband’s coverage has a $50,000 limit for my life. Because of the lack of coverage, I have to take a combination of other medications that cost $500 per month. That way I can make my insurance last longer.”
Jennifer Sommer, laid off due to COVID-19.

“It’s the large multinational corporations that could make the most significant difference in terms of leveling the playing field. I can’t afford to purchase my medications regardless of this crisis.”
Miguel Hortiguela, self-employed

“[Ontario Premier] Doug Ford delisted my treatment. Now I pay $125 per shot to my urologist every two weeks just to have him inject me. And this is on top of the cost of the drug.”
Anonymous, unemployed

During this public health crisis, the government must be doing everything possible to protect people across this country, and that includes expanding our public health care system to include prescription medications.
The Council of Canadians appreciates the energy and dedication of our chapter activists. If you are interested in joining a chapter, please see the contacts list below or get in touch with the Regional Organizer closest to you. For more information on the Council’s chapters, visit canadians.org or call us at 1-800-387-7177.

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