On October 21 Canadian voters took to the polls to elect a Liberal minority government.

Many of us are still reading the tea leaves of the results of that election, trying to discern what they signal for how we will move forward together to meet the serious and urgent challenges facing our country.

In the weeks following the election, I was on the road to meet with Council of Canadians supporters and Chapter activists from the Prairie provinces and British Columbia. I learned that in many places the election had divided communities, organizations and even families according to party loyalties. These conflicts will take some time to heal. But there was also general agreement that the common ground we share, and the urgency of the social and environmental problems we face, we need to recognize that the world we need will never be guaranteed or given to us. It must be invented in thousands of ways big and small – by people across the country who are coming together to ensure access to water and sanitation as a human right through their efforts to establish Blue Communities, by protecting our health care and public services from privatization, by demanding transparency, fairness and respect for human rights and the environment in global trade negotiations, and by taking meaningful action to bring about a just energy and economic transition for a Green New Deal.

Through our many efforts at many levels, the Council of Canadians builds connections among people who want to make a difference in their communities and in our world. Working with allies we connect the dots; we follow the money to expose corporate influence; we celebrate the successes of people resisting privatization of water and expropriation of land and watersheds for extractive industries. We welcome the turning tide brought about by the struggles of Indigenous communities for self-determination and we embrace and support the possibilities for justice that those struggles represent.

Working with others across the country, we assert that to be the “balance of power” in this minority government, we must be vigilant, creative and bold so that the necessary becomes possible.

In 2020 the Council of Canadians will celebrate 35 years of working for a better Canada and a better world. With the involvement and support of tens of thousands of people across the country, the Council of Canadians aspires to continue being a vibrant home for all our supporters and supporters-to-be; an organization and a movement for people who wish to reach across generations, regions and communities to build solidarity for social justice and care for our living world. I am honoured to be part of this coast-to-coast-to-coast community and I look forward to working with you to continue building our shared hope and determination.

What we desire for ourselves we wish for all.
To this end, may we take our share in the world’s work, and the world’s struggles.

- J.S. Woodsworth

Molly Kane joined Council of Canadians chapter members from across B.C., staff and Board members to share stories of campaigns and actions and to help plan the Council’s future work at the recent B.C. regional meeting.
Are there alternatives to free trade?

Squeezed between nativists who seek to obliterate the world trading system for their own purposes and neoliberals who want to use trade regimes to erode public power, the ongoing debate is missing a vision of a progressive system of trade rules. Too often, progressives end up rejecting trade agreements instead of proposing avenues for transforming world trade.

To look at these issues, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Trade Justice Network (of which the Council of Canadians is a member) held a day-long symposium in Ottawa in late November titled “Beyond Neo-Liberalism: Toward an Agenda for People and the Planet.”

In a keynote address, Maude Barlow, Honorary Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, set the scene for the discussion. She asked, “What would trade agreements look like if they prioritized the needs and rights of workers over corporations? What would they look like if they promoted a more sustainable model of food production that protects soil and water and respects farmers? What would they look like if they had to take into account their water and environmental footprints at home and in other countries? What would they look like if they prioritized a more sustainable sources of energy? What would they look like if instead of giving preferential treatment to global corporations, they established binding human rights and environmental obligations on corporations and placed capital controls on runaway speculation of the kind that caused the 2008 crash? What would they look like if they took into account the free, prior and informed consent of local Indigenous peoples now enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?”

There are many ways trade agreements have been proven to benefit corporations over people. The most glaring example is the investor-state dispute settlement provisions that give multinational corporations power over what countries can legislate. This has cost us money. Regulatory cooperation and trade rules have been used to ensure that public policy is measured by how it enhances trade rather than public welfare. It leads governments to favour multinational suppliers over local production.

As Barlow said, “Modern free trade agreements, along with deregulation and privatization, have led to the greatest wealth disparity since the robber barons of the turn of the 20th century. Of the world’s top economies, 31 are countries and 69 are corporations. Apple’s revenues exceed the GDPs of two-thirds of the world’s countries. Walmart’s annual revenues exceed the GDPs of 157 countries. BP is bigger than Russia. Exxon is bigger than India.”

Workshops at the symposium discussed drug pricing, environmental policy and the Green New Deal, overhauling dispute mechanisms to address environmental and human rights concerns, digital rights, Indigenous rights, food sovereignty, labour standards, and cultural diversity.

The progressive trade experts attending shared many ideas about how agreements could be binding on human rights, social issues, and the environment. The ideas included provisions that would allow people or governments to sue corporations for violations, including a basic series of rights in all agreements that if violated, the country could be removed from the deal or sanctioned, or the ability to impose penalties for environmental violations, and more.

Howard Mann, an advisor on international law, concluded by saying that trade agreements have little to do with trade itself. Countries are told they are adapting poorly to trade agreements, he noted, but it is trade agreements that create social problems such as income and gender inequality, unemployment and environmental degradation.

Since its inception the Council of Canadians has fought against the power granted to corporations through trade agreements. From the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement of 1988, through NAFTA, the World Trade Organization and Canada’s many Foreign Investment Protection Agreements, to the more recent deals with the European Union and Trans-Pacific countries, these deals enrich multinational corporations at the expense of the vast majority of people and the planet.

Trade agreements should be made by and for people, not corporations. It’s time to make trade deals fair, and trade policy open and democratic.

Sujata Dey is the trade campaigner for the Council of Canadians.

by Sujata Dey
Alberta Premier Jason Kenney warned that the worst election result would be a Liberal minority backed by the NDP. On Oct. 21, his nightmare came to pass.

Rather than accept the will of the 63 per cent of Canadians who voted, Liberal, NDP, Bloc and Green for climate action, Kenney fans the flames of Western separatism to try to overturn the election results.

Canadians feel sympathy for the plight of Albertans who are hurting from the 2014 oil price bust.

But be careful not to fall for Kenney’s emotional blackmail.

The high Conservative vote in Alberta was normal, not a blow to Canadian unity. Conservatives got 69 per cent of the vote, 5.5 per cent above their average in the five previous federal elections, when their vote ranged from 60-67 per cent. Federal Tory dominance in Alberta dates from John Diefenbaker in the 1950s.

Many Albertans have lost their jobs, their homes, fear for the future and are angry. But, many misdirect the object of their anger. Big Oil hasn’t been their friend.

Kenney portrays himself as Albertans’ champion. He isn’t. His government is spending $32 million on a war room and public inquiry to combat what he calls a “foreign environmentalist conspiracy” against Alberta. Kenney is right about a foreign campaign, if not quite a conspiracy. And it harms Albertans.

But Kenney gets the culprits wrong. Big Foreign Oil, not foreign environmentalists, have harmed Albertans by locking Alberta into narrowly exporting oil derived from oilsands bitumen, one of the world’s most toxic, high carbon-emitting resources.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, Shell and Exxon knew their business plan caused climate change. Yet they and other Big Oil corporations talked Alberta and Ottawa in the 1990s into giving them a sweetheart, next-to-zero royalty regime and low corporate taxes. It left Alberta’s finances in a lurch and an undiversified economy.

Alberta’s oilsands (also known as tar sands) are a very poor job creator. $1.3 million in investment in the oilsands produce one job. The oil industry across Canada directly employs only 63,000 workers, 0.3 per cent of all Canadian jobs. Indirect jobs from the oil industry are double that number. Thus the oil industry accounts for about one per cent of all Canadian employment.

Now Big Oil corporations are shedding workers to maximize profits. Cenovus Energy executive vice-president Kiron McFadyen wants to “de-man” the entire industry to achieve “zero manning.”

Alberta’s oilsands have no future. Big Foreign Oil knows it. In 2016, they began to cut-and-run. Norway’s Statoil and U.S.-based Devon Oil fully pulled out. Other foreign corporations partly pulled out: France’s Total S.A., Holland’s Shell Oil and U.S.-based ConocoPhillips, Koch and Murphy Oil.

Divestment from the oilsands and many conventional oil sites and pipelines within Alberta have stuck Albertans with over $250 billion in environmental liabilities, orphaned wells and toxic tailing lakes. If they fail to make Big Oil polluters pick up the tab for the mess they created, Albertans and other Canadians will have to clean it up at public expense.

This year more wells were decommissioned in Alberta than new wells drilled. Companies and industries that aren’t moving toward zero-carbon emissions, warned Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, will be punished by investors and go bankrupt.

As the world awakens to the climate emergency and moves off fossil fuels, the Kenney government and Big Oil hold Alberta in a fossil-fuel belt. It may soon resemble the rust belt — that swath of Midwest U.S. states of abandoned factories and broken dreams.

If he truly advocates for Albertans, Kenney will embrace the future by joining with Ottawa to manage a rapid phase-out of the oilsands in ways that support oil workers and their communities’ shift to new industries and jobs. Canadians everywhere would support that.

The best way to forge national unity is around a plan to get Canada to a post-carbon future, not by holding on to the fossil-fuel past.

This op-ed is reprinted with the author’s permission.

Gordon Laxer is a former member of the Council of Canadians’ Board of Directors and author of the hard-hitting report Billion Dollar Buyout: How Canadian taxpayers bought a climate-killing pipeline and Trump’s trade deal supports it. Laxer is the founding director of the Parkland Institute and political economy professor emeritus at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.
Maude Barlow has spent her life learning about water and sounding the alarm about what humans are doing to it. She says, “I have never discovered any more powerful truth than this: the world will only be transformed from the bottom up, from people fighting in their own communities because they care.”

In her new book *Whose Water is it Anyway? Taking Water Protection Into Public Hands*, she explores how the Blue Communities Project, a grassroots-based campaign, gives people tools they can use to push for the protection of water at the municipal level, ideas she shared on a multi-city book tour this fall. The following text is an excerpt of the book.

“This is a book about hope.

It is a story about everyday people defending the water resources of their communities and protecting the broader human right to water by ensuring it is now and forever a public trust, one that must not be allowed to fall under private, for-profit control.

It is a story about a grassroots campaign to address the water crisis the world is facing, which counters the argument that the best way to address this crisis is to commodify water and let the market decide who gets access to it and how.

But it is not a story about naïveté. It faces head-on some deeply disturbing realities we must acknowledge if we are to move forward.

In May 2016, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) released the most comprehensive environmental study the United Nations has ever undertaken. Reporting on its study’s findings, UNEP called water scarcity the scourge of the Earth and linked it directly to humanity’s continued degradation of the lands and forests that replenish the world’s freshwater sources.

In March 2018, UN Water released its annual World Water Development Report with a dire warning: if we do not change our ways, more than five billion people could suffer serious to severe water shortages in 30 years.

Even today 3.6 billion people live in areas that are water scarce for at least a month per year. This could increase to as many as 5.7 billion people by 2050.

On top of these water shortages, there are many parts of the world where accessible, clean water is simply unavailable. An April 2017 report by the World Health Organization warned that at least two billion people worldwide drink water contaminated with feces every day, killing
more than half a million people per year. The UN reports that 80% of wastewater from human activity is still discharged into waterways around the world without any pollution removal at all.

Some lay the blame for this at the feet of climate change. While it is true that human-generated greenhouse gas emissions have affected the water cycle and natural water storage systems, it is equally true that our active, collective abuse of water is another major cause of the world’s growing water crisis. Not only are we changing the climate around us as we heat up the world, we are polluting, depleting, damming, over-extracting and diverting the planet’s water systems.

Communities already living without clean water because of poverty, inequality and discrimination now find themselves in further danger as local water sources dry up or are claimed for profit-related purposes.

Opposition to the takeover of municipal water services by private transnational water companies has grown, and there are many successful cases where municipalities have returned their water services to public management.

Opposition to bottled water has also increased in the last few years, especially among the young, as people understand the heavy environmental footprint of this industry. And movements such as the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature promote the adoption of legal systems that recognize and enforce nature’s own rights.

These are the benchmarks of progress on the macro scale, but there has been equivalent progress on a smaller and more local scale – the rise of the Blue Communities movement. In the last decade, an ever-growing number of municipalities and civil society institutions have designated themselves Blue Communities, committing to defend the human right to water and to help curb plastic contamination in their communities. It is an exciting and hopeful development, a crucial piece of the multi-faceted water-protection movement that is having real and positive results.

A Blue Community adopts three fundamental principles:

1. A Blue Community promises to protect and promote water and sanitation as human rights. This is in keeping with the United Nations’ 2010 resolution declaring that water and sanitation are fundamental human rights and that no one should be denied these services because of an inability to pay.

2. A Blue Community promises to protect water as a public trust by promoting publicly-financed, owned and operated water and wastewater services. All decisions about access to water and sanitation must be made by people and their elected officials, not by a for-profit investor.

3. Where there are accessible clean public water sources available, a Blue Community bans or phases out the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities and at municipal events and promotes its tap water as a safe and reliable source of drinking water. While this step alone will not solve the planet’s plastics crisis, it plays an important role in diminishing the devastating environmental footprint of the bottled water industry.

The Blue Communities project started in Canada in 2009 in reaction to the policies of the Conservative government then in power. Claiming that municipalities could save money, the federal government was promoting the privatization of Canadian water services by withholding federal funding to those towns and cities that refused to turn to a public-private partnership (P3) for water infrastructure upgrading.

The Council of Canadians partnered with the Canadian Union of Public Employees and Eau Secours in Quebec to establish the Blue Communities Project as a way of helping municipalities ward off unwanted privatization. To date, 27 Canadian municipalities have taken the Blue Communities pledge. But the concept didn’t stay in Canada. Surprising us initially, it started to catch on in other parts of the world: cities such as Bern, Paris, Thessaloniki and Berlin chose to become Blue Communities in highly visible, public ceremonies. Then it spread further. Institutions such as universities, unions and faith-based organizations adopted our principles and have also become Blue Communities, vowing to protect water and the human right to water in a variety of ways.

Many find the concept empowering as it is a positive step forward in the face of the many environmental and human rights threats we now face.

For me, fighting for water justice has been a powerful personal journey. It has taken me from the United Nations and international conferences to the world’s most terrible slums in search of the solution to the twin ecological and human water crises that threaten the planet and all living beings. While I deeply believe that we need good and strong law at all levels of government to protect both ecosystems and humans from the coming global water crisis, the most powerful actions we can take personally are at the local level. This book reflects a dream of a world going Blue, one community at a time."

Maude Barlow is a best-selling author, activist and Honorary Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.
A Canada-wide investigation has revealed dangerously high levels of lead in tap water across the country. This investigation took a combined effort from 120 journalists, working at nine universities and 10 media organizations across the country. They reported that millions of Canadians are exposed to this neurotoxin through the aging lead pipes that distribute water from municipal water treatment plant to households across 11 cities.

This is a public health crisis. The World Health Organization states there is no safe level of lead. This toxic metal is damaging to human health, causing long-term and irreversible effects to the brain and nervous systems. It causes developmental and behavioural changes in children and increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney disease in adults.

While this latest discovery got a lot of media attention, it’s just a piece in a larger issue with Canada’s drinking water.

The United Nations recognized the human right to water and sanitation in 2010. Although Canada joined the international consensus in 2012, the fundamental right to clean, safe drinking water is not being consistently and effectively delivered. There are no federally-mandated drinking water standards and only a patchwork of regulations among provinces.

Water testing standards and practices vary greatly across the country, and are nonexistent in some provinces. Meanwhile, the public remains largely in the dark about the quality of their drinking water. This is unacceptable at a time when higher standards are the norm in other countries, and there is no shortage of lessons to learn from.

It’s been well-documented that many cities in the United States, including Flint, Newark, and Pittsburgh, have dangerous levels of lead in the drinking water coming out of their taps. In the infamous case of Flint, Michigan, 12 people died from Legionnaires disease caused by the mismanagement of water and lead leaching from water pipes. In Canada, we have read the stories and echoed the calls for action to address this crisis. Yet, this latest report revealed that lead levels in Prince Rupert, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina and Montreal are equal to or higher than the ones in Flint at the height of its lead crisis. A major difference is that in Canada, there aren’t official requirements to test and report to residents about their drinking water, something that has been in place in the United States since 1991. This lack of transparency confirms the federal government’s inaction when it comes
to fulfilling the human right to water. This news caused public outcry among residents from Montreal to Prince Rupert.

At the same time, we must also acknowledge the more than 100 First Nations communities that have been fighting for safe, clean drinking water for over 20 years. Today, nearly 100 First Nations communities are still under short-term or long-term drinking water advisories, while navigating the colonial government’s bureaucracy and fighting for their right to self-governance.

The Trudeau government’s commitment to provide safe drinking water to First Nations has been significantly undercut by what Pam Palmater, a Mi’kmaw lawyer from Eel River Bar First Nation and Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University in Toronto, called their “shell games with reporting on water advisories,” “purposeful, discriminatory underfunding,” and “lack of long-term commitment.” Improving standards and fixing drinking water problems across Canada cannot exclude real, lasting solutions to provide safe, clean drinking water to First Nations communities.

How does lead get into our drinking water? The water leaving municipal treatment plants is lead-free, but lead enters the water through the network of antiquated lead pipes. These aging pipes are part of the crumbling water and wastewater infrastructure problem that plagues municipalities across the country. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimates that municipalities need $50 billion to upgrade their water and wastewater infrastructure in poor or very poor conditions. Yet, the federal solution to decades of underfunding has been to welcome private investors to finance, build and operate our infrastructure through the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Canadians cannot be forced to choose between lead-laced water and privatized water at higher rates.

Federally-mandated drinking water standards cannot come without a funding commitment from the federal government in the form of investments or low-cost, public loans. In 2012, the federal government imposed new standards for sewage treatment on municipalities, but the confusing roll out and inadequate funding resulted in a total exercise in frustration. To take one example, in Newfoundland and Labrador, cities and towns are struggling to come up with $600 million to bring their wastewater infrastructure up to federal code by 2020 or they face steep fines.

Decades of a lack of federal oversight and underfunding of public infrastructure have resulted in this massive public health crisis. While some immediate solutions, like treating water with anti-corrosives, are available, it will take nothing less than a comprehensive approach and serious commitment from all levels of government to address this crisis, both in major cities and remote First Nations communities.

 Canadians have bought into the “myth of abundance.” We often take for granted the water that comes out of our tap every day. Luckily, people are choosing to act to protect their water locally through the Blue Communities Project (Read more on pages 6 and 7).

As the newly elected minority Liberal government is in its early stages, we urgently need a Ministry of Water that will respect the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples to their land and water, implement federally reinforced drinking water standards, implement the human right to water and sanitation, ensure public funding to upgrade water infrastructure, and protect our waterways and groundwater.

Most importantly, we need a public movement – like the one created with Blue Communities – that will continue to hold our government accountable every step of the way. With the new minority government, we have a critical opportunity to do just that. Our health – and our children’s health – is on the line.

Vi Bui is the Water Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
John Cartwright is a long-time labour leader and social justice advocate. He was elected Chairperson of the Council of Canadians at the Annual Members Meeting in June 2019. He holds the busy position of the President of the Toronto & York Region Labour Council, representing 200,000 union members who work in every sector of the economy. A carpenter by trade, he led the Toronto Building Trades for a decade before taking his role with the Labour Council. He spoke recently with Canadian Perspectives about his hopes for the Council of Canadians in the coming years.

**CP:** How long have you been involved with the Council of Canadians?

I attended one of the founding meetings that led to the creation of the Council in 1985, and have been a supporter ever since.

**CP:** What made you want to become Chairperson of the Council’s Board of Directors?

I was honoured to join the Board because of the Council’s vision for the future of Canada. I have always admired Maude Barlow’s role in this country and internationally. I hope that my experience in struggles for social, racial and climate justice can help inform the work of the Board. The Council has gone through some difficult times, but we are able to move forward together. I am committed to help a process of renewing and rebuilding the strength of the Council, and to ensure we engage everyone in shaping our collective future.

**CP:** What role do you think the Council has in civil society?

There are many organizations focused on specific issues, but few with the breadth of analysis and campaigns that we have undertaken. As a non-partisan organization we can work across party lines. We have chapters in cities and towns across the country, with a proven track record of community leadership. And we have a great staff team in Ottawa and across Canada who know how to lead campaigns. We are a trusted ally on many issues, and are well-placed to convene a range of organizations around a common approach to this minority government. Civil society should be part of the “balance of power” determining the political agenda of Canada, pressuring Members of Parliament and parties to enact a progressive legislative agenda.

**CP:** Why do you think people should be involved?

I feel that every one of us should use their skills to work for a just society. That can happen in so many ways: signing petitions, writing letters, community organizing, lobbying politicians, establishing Blue Communities, developing campaigns, attending demonstrations, supporting struggles of Indigenous peoples, and whatever other actions our creative ideas can generate. Each of us has a role to play in this journey to build a better world.

**CP:** What challenges do you see ahead?

The climate emergency is directly related to the growing levels of inequality and corporate power in our globalized economy. Deepening our understanding of how to challenge the agenda of the 1% will be crucial to our effectiveness. We have to keep learning from each other as we shape our campaigns in coming years. Many of us were drawn to the Council in the fight against free trade, so we need to find ways to engage younger activists as well as diverse communities across the country.

**CP:** The Council of Canadians will be celebrating 35 years of activism next year, why do you think the organization has had such staying power?

We have had amazing leaders and the support of tens of thousands of donors, activists, chapter members and allies from coast-to-coast. Thanks to the financial contributions of those people we have maintained our independence from government or corporate funding and influence. We have presented a cohesive program for social justice that rings true with most Canadians. Maude has been an inspiring voice locally and across the globe. Our focus – on the Canada we want – allows people of all backgrounds to see their values reflected in our work.

**CP:** Is there anything else you want to add?

I want to honour everyone who has been involved in the Council of Canadians since its inception. Even if someone was only active for a brief period of time, it has made a difference. For those who have dedicated so much of their life’s work to the Council, I want to express our deepest gratitude. And to those who wish to join us for the future I want to extend a warm welcome!
Chapter Action Updates

Council of Canadians chapters help put campaigns and social and economic justice issues in the spotlight in communities across the country. Chapter activists continue to be busy protecting water and public health care, challenging unfair trade deals, calling for urgent and immediate action on climate change, and to standing up for democracy. Here are just a few examples of their recent actions:

**Vancouver chapter shows support for public health care**
Members of the Council of Canadians Vancouver chapter brought signs of support and their voices to a recent press conference hosted by the British Columbia Health Coalition in response to the final arguments in Dr. Brian Day’s constitutional case against medicare. Dr. Day, owner of two private, for profit clinics, is arguing in court that B.C.’s ban on private clinics is unconstitutional. If successful, Dr. Day’s case could fundamentally change Canada’s public medicare program, allowing a private health care system that people with money could pay for. Studies have shown that parallel public-private systems worsen wait times because it removes doctors and other health care professionals from the public system.

**Northwest Territories Chapter pushes to follow B.C.’s example**
In late October, British Columbia became the first province to table legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into law. For years, the Northwest Territories Chapter also lobbied their government to do the same. A few days after B.C.’s announcement, the same language was included in the list of priorities for a newly elected territorial government.

UNDRIP was recognized in 2007, but still has no official force in Canadian law. Council of Canadians chapters across the country are acting in solidarity with Indigenous peoples to have these basic rights and Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination recognized.

**Celebrating a long-time Montreal activist**
The Council of Canadians extends deep appreciation to Abdul Pirani who has stepped down after more than a decade of taking action with the Montreal Chapter and serving eight years as a member of the Council of Canadians’ Board of Directors. Abdul has been a central figure in Montreal’s vibrant activist community and the Council is grateful for all his energy and efforts.

**Climate strikes in Atlantic**
Atlantic chapters continue to support youth-led climate strikes including during the Climate Strike Week in late September. In addition, the St. John’s and Fredericton chapters have been pushing for their cities to declare a climate emergency. Fredericton hosted a Green New Deal event to a packed room, commented on a draft municipal plan using a climate lens, and staged a die-in at the local Farmers’ market in the days leading up to the federal election. Council of Canadians chapters across the country have been joining youth in the streets to demand urgent action from governments on the climate crisis.

**Water Not Gold events in Nova Scotia**
The North Shore chapter has been working with SuNNS (Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia) and other allies to raise awareness about the extraction industry overall, but also on a specific proposal for a gold mine in their area. Earlier in October and during a pro-industry conference, chapter members organized a series of events including book launches in both Tatamagouche and Halifax for Joan Kuyek’s new book, *Unearthing Justice: How to protect your community from the mining industry*, which in part addresses the colonial roots of the mining industry as well as ongoing environmental racism across Canada. Chapter members also participated in a rally outside the mining conference.

If you are interested in joining a Council of Canadians chapter near you, call us toll-free at 1-800-387-7177, or visit our website at canadians.org/chapters. We can also help you start a chapter if there isn’t one in your community.
In October 2018, the International Panel on Climate Change issued a wakeup call, releasing a report that says we have until 2030 to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent, toward net zero by 2050. Scientists from around the globe were clear about the urgent need to act quickly.

This past spring, the Council of Canadians helped launch the Pact for a Green New Deal and put the call for climate crisis solutions front and centre in the federal election.

We are also taking action to support and amplify the growing wave of youth-led climate strikes that that are sweeping the globe, with nearly 1 million people of all ages in Canada – and 7 million around the world – taking part in September’s strike. Council of Canadians chapters, staff, board members and supporters took part in many of the strikes from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

**Federal election**

Canada just had its first climate election, and we turned up the heat on federal candidates and parties to support a Green New Deal.

We supplied Council supporters and chapters with organizing tools to “grill the parties not the planet.” We produced an election Organizing Toolkit to help get out the vote for a Green New Deal and a Voter’s Guide for Council chapters and supporters to use in their community to encourage people to vote.

We prepared window signs and questions for candidates. We supported
Council of Canadians chapters that organized election events, including candidates debates on the climate crisis. We also provided real-time commentary on the leaders’ debate on social media.

In October, 17.9 million people went to the polls. Sixty-three per cent of Canadians voted for parties with significant climate planks in their platform. Polling indicates the Conservative Party paid a price at the ballot box for not having a climate plan, a direct result of the work the Council of Canadians and our many allies did to change to political narrative before and during the election campaign.

Keep it in the ground
This past August, on the shores of the Unist’ot’en Camp, we tasted the pristine deep turquoise waters of the Wedzin Kwah River for the first time. We were there to visit with frontline Wet’suwet’en land water protectors, including those on Unist’ot’en, Gidimt’en and Likhts’amisyu clan territories. The people in these camps are defending their lands, culture, and water from the Coastal GasLink Pipeline, owned by TC Energy (formerly TransCanada).

The trip was a remarkable experience that will continue to influence our climate justice work in solidarity with land and water defenders.

With pipeline fights heating up, this was an important moment for us to reconnect and build deeper relationships with frontline communities, Indigenous peoples, and other climate justice allies. We also met with allies fighting the Trans Mountain Pipeline in Vancouver.

This critical trip to build these important relationships wouldn’t have been possible without Council of Canadians supporters. And with your ongoing support, we hope to continue this kind of deeper relationship building with frontline communities in 2020.

Building offshore resistance
We are playing an important role in challenging offshore drilling, through our South Shore chapter’s Campaign to Protect Offshore Nova Scotia (CPONS).

People from coast-to-coast-to-coast have added their support with 66,000 people signing our petition to the federal government calling for a moratorium on offshore oil and gas exploration until a full, independent public inquiry has been completed.

As a result of our community-focused campaign with CPONS, 12 municipalities in Nova Scotia have also joined the call for an inquiry.

This November, we brought U.S. municipal representatives who are challenging offshore drilling in their communities to Nova Scotia to share their stories and help build momentum for a public inquiry.

Corporate capture and criminalization
The Council of Canadians has escalated efforts to raise awareness of the deepening corporate influence in democratic institutions and processes, which is putting the interests of Big Oil ahead of people and the planet.

We are challenging the increasing criminalization of Indigenous land and water defenders, who are on the front lines defending their culture and environment, as well as protecting the climate for all of us.

We issued action alerts challenging this criminalization and the double standard that lets fossil fuel corporations like Coastal Gas Link and Alton Gas break the law with impunity. Indigenous struggles for sovereignty are an integral part of climate action, and our solidarity with Indigenous peoples is crucial for building a better world.

The Pact for a Green New Deal
A Green New Deal will provide a rapid, inclusive and far-reaching just transition to slash greenhouse gas 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.

Working with coalitions and allies, including the Green Economy Network, the Climate Action Network, the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group and others, the Pact for a Green New Deal will provide a just transition to a post-carbon world that leaves no one behind.

More than 100 organizations support a Green New Deal, and nearly 200 communities hosted town halls across the country to talk about it. So far, more than 50,000 people have pledged support for climate justice and a Green New Deal.

An update on what was shared at the town halls is available at GreenNewDealCanada.ca. Now that the federal election is over we’re excited to get back to work in this coalition and to continue developing what a Green New Deal would mean for Canada.

Building Green New Deals for our communities
The push for a Green New Deal is also happening at a local level, focusing on transformative change in our municipalities. A few months ago, the Council launched the Green New Deal Communities Organizing Guide to help people encourage their municipal representatives to commit to the changes needed for a Green New Deal.

Already several communities are getting on board, and other communities are stepping forward to take on this work over the coming year. If you’re interested in building a Green New Deal for your community we would love to hear from you! Email greennewdeal@canadians.org for details.

What’s next?
Decisions at various levels on key fossil fuel extraction projects are expected in the coming months, including the Coastal GasLink and TransMountain pipelines, as well as the massive Teck tar sands mine.

Right here, right now, and in the coming weeks and months, we can decide our future with a Green New Deal. And we can win it by turning up the heat on our Members of Parliament and reminding them of the climate action and progressive values people supported in the recent federal election.

Dylan Penner and Robin Tress are climate and social justice campaigners with the Council of Canadians.
Solidarity Corner: Reclaiming A’se’k

The People of Pictou Landing First Nation have been fighting to reclaim A’se’k – also known as Boat Harbour – for more than 50 years. Now supported by fisher and other allied groups, this Mi’kmaq community has nearly reached its goal of stopping toxic effluent from the mill at Abercrombie Point, Nova Scotia, from being dumped into the tidal estuary that was once an important part of Mi’kmaw life in the area.

This community is literally fighting for their lives. The toxic sludge dumped every single day into Boat Harbour brings a high rate of rare cancers and air-borne diseases to this small community. Northern Pulp, the company that currently owns and operates the mill, is putting its own profits above all else, including public health, right relationship with Indigenous peoples, the stability and dignity of its own workers, and the environment.

The Council of Canadians has been working in solidarity with Pictou Landing First Nation and others to ensure the treatment facility at Boat Harbour is closed by the provincially legislated deadline of January 31, 2020.

Our chapter activists, board members, supporters and staff have made written submissions, sent action alerts, signed statements of support, written blogs, contacted all levels of government, and marched in solidarity with the community. Our local chapters have also held book launch events for Joan Baxter, author of The Mill: Fifty Years of Pulp and Protest.

Fifty years of pollution is enough. The people of Mi’kmaw’ki and Nova Scotia should not be asked to endure any further delay. The Council of Canadians stands in solidarity with the people of Pictou Landing First Nation. Use hashtag #31January2020 to show your support.