



Jennie and Greg Humbert are part of the Council's #Pledge2Protect effort, helping to build awareness about changes to federal environmental legislation that have left 99 per cent of Canada's lakes and rivers unprotected. They are pledging to protect Tomiko Lake in Ontario.

A Better Canada Is Possible: Envisioning our future

A vision for water

by Emma Lui

The year is 2045. Like our neighbours down south in California and in regions around the world, we experienced worsening drought year after year in the west, Ontario and Quebec, and saw it spread to other provinces. The droughts further impacted the hunting, fishing and food gathering of Indigenous communities.

In 2015, we had a federal government that gutted most of our water protec-

tions. Millions of dollars were slashed from water protection programs. More than 3,000 environmental assessments

While it is important to celebrate the past, it is just as important to look forward to the future.

were cancelled because of changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Ninety-nine per cent of lakes and rivers

in Canada and the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples were delisted from the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The Fisheries Act, originally legislated to protect fish, no longer did so.

While we are still seeing the effects on our lakes and rivers, in 2045 we, thankfully, have reached a time where a critical mass of people truly understand the sacredness of water. And most importantly, they take action to protect it.

The gutting of our environmental legislation and the onslaught of tar sands expansion, pipelines, fracking and privatization



Board members Andrea Furlong and Ken Kavanagh were in the streets of St. John's, Newfoundland when provincial premiers were in town, reminding politicians of the importance of health care.

projects represented a turning point for many people. Building on the advocacy work of generations before them, new and older generations worked together educating people, marching, organizing creative actions, and participating in direct actions.

In 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously recognized Aboriginal title to 1,700 square kilometres of land to the Tsilhqot'in Nation, giving them the right to determine how their lands were used. This decision later spurred the public and governments to recognize and respect traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous communities now decide how the land and waters will be used, managed and protected.

Water literacy has grown exponentially. At a very early age, children are taught where their drinking water comes from, what can harm it, and how to protect it. Children learn that there are some things – like tar sands bitumen and other fossil fuels – that must just stay in the ground.

In 2045 we no longer pit creating jobs against the environment. It is hard for most of us to imagine creating jobs that would risk our drinking water, or to understand that people once believed it had to be one or the other.

Every decision about water is now discussed within communities and everyone participates because we know the central role water plays in our lives. Governments now truly serve the people and they manage water as a public trust – it is not appropriated or subordinated for private gain. And governments take direction from the community because they know people outnumber governments and corporations.

In 2045, people have come to know their individual power as well as their collective power. With knowledge, they lead the way to water justice.

A vision for democracy by Dylan Penner

In the 2015 federal election, up to 1.9 million citizens could be deprived of their right to vote due to voter suppression (including Canadians living abroad and people who relied on Voter Information Cards or vouching in the past). In this election, too, 2.6 million non-citizens who currently live and work in Canada will not be allowed to vote (including migrant workers, refugee claimants, permanent residents, and undocumented immigrants).

Between now and 2045 we can change course to build an inclusive democracy

where everyone has a voice, not only in elections, but every day. Many places are already taking preliminary steps in this direction, such as New York City, which is exploring legislation to extend voting rights to permanent residents.

What if we didn't just vote for the leadership of governments, but also democratized corporations and the economy? Given the huge role large corporations play in shaping society, imagine if they were accountable not just to their shareholders, but to the communities they operate in and the people who work for them.

There are baby steps in this direction being taken through rights-based organizing, which, as Global Exchange in the U.S. puts it, aims to "place the rights of people and nature over the interests of corporations." If communities everywhere were to define acceptable corporate behaviour, this powerful expression of democracy could outweigh corporate power.

We need to transform decision making through an evolution of representative democracy into one that's more participatory and includes much deeper engagement beyond elections. We need to empower communities with greater self-determination in tangible ways,

People of all ages joined to form a literal line in the sand against the Energy East pipeline in Red Head, located just outside of Saint John, New Brunswick. Communities across Canada are trying to stop this massive pipeline project.



such as general public votes on key issues and legislation, and participatory budgeting.

One model is liquid democracy (also known as delegative democracy) where people can vote directly on issues or choose to delegate their vote to someone they trust to vote in their best interest. We need to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples to free, prior, informed consent and build a nation-to-nation treaty relationship. We need to recognize that much of our society exists and operates on the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples and enshrine the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the make-up of our democratic institutions.

If we want a future where we have more control over the realities that impact our daily lives and hopes and dreams, and where corporations have less control, we need people who will stand up and speak out for truly representative democracy.

A vision for health care by Michael Butler

When Tommy Douglas first campaigned to introduce universal public health care in the 1960 Saskatchewan

provincial election, he had long-term aspirations for building a better tomorrow. His dream that health care should be based on need, not ability to pay, was truly visionary in scope and groundbreaking in its effects.

Perhaps most important though, Tommy Douglas saw medicare as something greater; it was about the values and principles we aspire to and choose to defend. Medicare was meant to inspire us to build a more just Canada where we make choices that are grounded in community, kindness and decency. Looking forward to the future of our public health system, it is these values that need to guide us as we imagine how to build a healthier nation.

If we were to imagine a future for health care in 2045, we would see that Canadians have been successful in their demand that medicare be protected, strengthened and expanded.

In 2045 governments recognize and prioritize public health care, ensuring it is available to everyone without cost. Provincial and territorial governments work with the federal government to provide accountability on health care spending, foster innovation, and share best practices.

For-profit schemes and public-private partnerships have been abandoned in favour of a properly funded public system.

Medicare has been expanded to include pharmacare. All Canadians now have access to the medications they need. The federal government leads a bulk purchasing program that produces significant savings on the cost of medications. People no longer have to choose between being able to pay for food and housing or pay for their medications.

In 2045, Canadians continue to show overwhelming support for our universal public health care system. Despite neoliberal profiteers' earlier attempts to privatize the health care system, Canadians recognize that health care is better left in public hands. Medicare continues to be our most cherished social program and a part of our national identity.

Tommy Douglas showed us that anything is possible if Canadians come together and demand an equitable and caring nation.

A vision for the North by the Northwest Territories Council of Canadians chapter

It is the year 2045. Longstanding discussions between Indigenous and



Climate change brings catastrophic fires to the northern boreal forest, decimating wildlife populations and traditional subsistence economies. Photo by Craig Yeo.

non-Indigenous peoples have finally led to the establishment of Denendeh, formerly known as the Northwest Territories.

Denendeh is governed by a coalition of indigenous and public governments. It is the envy of citizens throughout the country. Its structure and decisions are significantly influenced by the voices of Elders and Youth and a commitment to gender parity.

The Denendeh government truly follows consensus decision-making traditions, having eliminated the colonial form used by the now disbanded government of the Northwest Territories.

All individuals elected to the Denendeh, Inuvialuit, and Nunavut government assemblies are required to speak the Indigenous language most common among the Indigenous people they represent even if these people make up a minority of the population. Broad use of Indigenous languages has spurred all Denendeh residents to decolonize and reconceptualize relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and with the natural environment. As in the rest of Canada, mandatory voting has greatly increased the activism and engagement of the electorate.

Water shortages and erratic, dangerous climatic conditions are urgent issues in Denendeh. Residents knew these days were coming three decades ago when sub-Arctic and Arctic communities forced governments to prohibit fracking and any more hydrocarbon development.

Denendeh communities completed a decade of intensive renewable energy development in 2025, the same year that all public and private use of fossil fuels became illegal, except as an occasional back-up to a renewable energy source. Relocations of Denendeh communities due to droughts, forest fires and erosion provided the opportunity for citizens to reclaim traditional territories and to reconstitute communities on the basis of distributed renewable energy systems. Today, solar and biomass are Denendeh's main energy sources.

Keepers of the land and water are active in every community. They are guided by the Elders and manage and monitor the natural environment. They have the authority and support to intervene in ways that keep all elements of the ecosystem in balance.

Partnerships and coalitions have reshaped social dynamics in Denendeh. In the

old days under the government of the Northwest Territories, there was a huge gap in the socio-economic well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Today, the gap has closed. There is equal priority given to meeting the needs and finding a meaningful place for every resident in Denendeh. The Elders say that communities today are egalitarian places, just as they were centuries ago.

Civil society groups continue to thrive in Denendeh. They are no longer silenced or marginalized by government but are actively sought as partners in support of local communities and the coalition government. Most often, civil society groups provide valuable research and analytical skills to these parties. The Denendeh Chapter of the Council of Canadians – formerly the Northwest Territories Chapter – continues to be active mainly through the leadership of young people from communities throughout Denendeh.

A vision for trade
by Sujata Dey

Today, in 2015, with a new era of globalization, and the communications and technological revolution that spawned it, trade could unite us rather than broaden our divides. With Twitter and Facebook,

we can exchange viewpoints with activists all over the world. We can follow the revolution in real time. Social media has the power to bring masses of people together instantly.

However, globalization, or corporate-led globalization, has come at the price of mass injustices. Companies seek to make the most profits by pressuring states to lower environmental, labour and social standards. As globalization goes on, many, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Oxfam and the International Monetary Fund, have warned against rising inequality between people. Thomas Piketty says that we are entering historic levels of inequality – where the 1 per cent have reached a point never seen since the French revolution.

Trade agreements could be used to fight corporate power, balancing it out globally.

Instead, current trade agreements are the opposite. They are shielded from public scrutiny, negotiated in idyllic resorts between corporate lobbies and a select group of lawmakers. Instead of granting more power to people, they enshrine corporate rights. The investor-state dispute settlement provisions, which allow corporations to sue governments, are a prime example of that. Corporations and their investments have been protected and elevated in trade agreements. A corporation can sue a government to protect their profits and can overturn legislation meant to protect our environment, labour and social programs.

So what would a people-friendly trade agreement look like? What can we strive for 30 years from now, in 2045? The primary criteria would have to be that governments would preserve their right to regulate. As well, trade agreements would be linked to democratic bodies or court systems that would protect human, democratic, environmental, social and labour rights.

The process of creating a trade agreement would have to be transparent and inclusive. It wouldn't be enough to analyze the economic bottom line through questionable models, but the effects trade would have on human rights, on the environment and on social programs should be considered. It wouldn't be enough to show that

there is economic growth; but that this economic growth should be distributed evenly among all people in society. The agreement should protect public services, encourage food sustainability, promote alternative energy, and work towards a global fossil-free economy.

Can we get there? In our fast-changing technology-driven world, we have the ability to come up with solutions that we have never been able to produce previously. With our collective brainpower of 7.3 billion people worldwide, we can share ideas of how to save our planet and make this imagined future a reality.

A vision for youth by Brigette DePape

1989 is the year I was born. In *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein explains how it was just around that time that the world had a choice: to choose a path of sustainable development (1988 having been a year when climate became part of the public consciousness), or to plough forward with capitalism.

In the battle of worldviews, capitalist globalization won in many ways, with the "Western consumerist lifestyle not only surviving," but, according to Klein, growing "significantly more lavish." This came at the expense of the Earth, and of thousands of cultures, languages, and even people's lives.

So in 1995, when I was in grade one and NAFTA was being signed, a group of people stood and held up an American flag behind then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney to make the invisible visible – to show we were all becoming like the United States. This is just one story of many of the anti-globalization movement.

I am grateful to those who came before me who were critical of NAFTA, who resisted and pointed to more sane and healthy ways of being. They carry the seeds of another way.

I see the world at a turning point, much like the choice the world had in 1988 when climate first came to mass public consciousness. My hope for the next 30 years is that we will carry the seeds of our

mamas, papas, grandmas, and grandpas in the movement and choose a world that isn't made of oil and plastic, but instead plant the seeds and grow a wonderful, healthy world.

Here are some of my hopes for the next 30 years:

- ▼ Good, healthy nutritious food that is local and affordable is the norm.
- ▼ We have a Council of Canadians chapter in every city.
- ▼ Canada is 100 per cent powered by renewable energy, as envisioned by Melina Laboucan-Massimo's vision in the speech she gave at the Jobs, Justice, and the Climate rally in July. "We have a huge opportunity to transition even in places like Alberta, which has the highest solar potential in this country. We've been looking down for far too long, and we've been digging the bottom of the barrel, and we must now turn our gaze towards the sun."
- ▼ Everyone living in Canada can vote. Right now, newcomers to Canada cannot vote. How is this possible? I have friends who have been here for eight years who are not allowed to vote.
- ▼ Farmers' markets are the new shopping malls and fair trade is the new free trade.
- ▼ Happiness and health are the measures of a country's well-being. All people feel a sense of community, health, belonging, and purpose.
- ▼ We have good-quality, accessible public health care.
- ▼ The right to water is respected. We see the end of water plundering for corporate interests, and instead a protection of water and the respect of the human right to water.
- ▼ Indigenous rights are respected. All of the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations are implemented.
- ▼ Progressive policies promised by progressive parties in our 2015 Youth Voter's Guide, including those to address youth employment, student debt, the climate crisis, Indigenous rights and democracy, are implemented.

With the federal election now just days away, I do believe we are at the beginning of a new wave of change. We will see a record number of youth vote for change this election. And no matter what the outcome is on October 19, the people's movements will be stronger than ever.