

Chapter Activist Profile

Charlene Morton,
South Shore, Nova Scotia

The South Shore of Nova Scotia is known for its picturesque coastline views, beaches and artisan communities. It's also home to the vibrant South Shore Council of Canadians Chapter, whose members are particularly active on water issues in their region. Charlene Morton is a local chapter activist and spoke recently with *Canadian Perspectives* about why she volunteers her time.

How did you first get involved with the Council of Canadians?

Although I'm originally from the South Shore, I had moved away for work and was living in Vancouver for several years. I often came home in the summer, and, during the summer of 2011, I was home and volunteered for the Growing Green Festival through the Town of Bridgewater Community Sustainability Network. After getting to know Marion Moore, Co-Chair of the South Shore Chapter, through Festival volunteer work and having been a supporter of the Council of Canadians for years, I was happy to take up an invitation to join the chapter steering committee when I retired and moved back to Nova Scotia the following summer.

What is the chapter focused on these days?

The chapter has been working on water and energy-related issues lately. We organized the third annual photo exhibit for Water Week in the spring and we achieved the first Blue Community designation in Atlantic Canada with the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg passing the three resolutions in December 2015. In April, we launched the campaign to "Protect Offshore Nova Scotia," focusing on the reform of the Canada–Nova Scotia



Charlene Morton (left) sits on a pier in the South Shore with Amy Buckland-Nicks of the Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation. The two women work together on water issues.

Offshore Petroleum Board, a regulatory agency that has given approvals to StatOil (Norway) and Shell Oil to drill off the South Shore very close to fragile fishing grounds. We're also working on raising awareness about proportional representation and organizing a panel discussion about the efficiency of biomass-driven energy.

What is your most memorable moment or campaign?

Most campaigns are inspiring because of the new people and allies one meets and works with from local communities and the region in general. The Water Week photo exhibit, which we've been doing for the past three years, has grown and taken me into different Art Gallery and school communities. The Campaign to Protect Offshore NS has been the most interesting in terms of research and the growing list of contacts and endorsements. The Blue Communities Project was another learning process as we worked with municipal staff, committees and councilors. From these experiences, one collects memorable moments, knowing that they all offer considerable inspiration and knowledge for volunteer work as well as bringing in new friends and allies to share strategies and solutions for common problems.

What challenges does the chapter face?

We're a pretty active group politically but the work can be all-consuming, so burnout

is an issue. Although we do have a solid group of people involved, we're always trying to recruit new members. We usually ask people attending a meeting or public event to identify those who might be interested and then we reach out to them.

What advice would you give to people who might be considering becoming a chapter activist?

It's so important to build a support base. Being a small group in a small rural area means you need to generate a broad base so you're not working on issues alone. We meet a lot of knowledgeable people, working on things that really matter for everyone. It's nice to see people come together and work hard to achieve meaningful goals for their communities and beyond.

For more information about how to join a chapter in your area, visit our website at www.canadians.org/chapters or call us toll-free at 1-800-387-7177.

