



Chapter Activist Profile

Elma Parker
Northumberland, Ontario

Elma Parker has a strong connection to the Council of Canadians. She is a long-time supporter and one of our longest-serving chapter activists. She helped start the Northumberland chapter 25 years ago and today, with Elma's help, the chapter is still going strong. The chapter covers an area along the north coast of Lake Ontario and is centred in the picturesque town of Cobourg, Ontario.

When did you join the Council?

I joined the Council of Canadians in 1989 after I was inspired by a letter from Maude Barlow. I'd never heard of the organization or its author before. The letter was probably about water and the importance of our rights and needs. I thought it was important enough to send a contribution to the cause. The cheque was acknowledged with a card showing I had joined the organization, which I have renewed every year since.

How and when did the Northumberland chapter get started?

Not knowing about chapters in the area or across Canada, I sort of forgot about the Council of Canadians until months

later. I read a letter in the local paper about the Council, written by Leigh Thomson, in which she mentioned starting a chapter. I phoned her and awhile later the Northumberland chapter was born. Several well-known activists committed their time and energy to the chapter, and a great youth movement joined. Everyone had a job. The meetings were informative and enjoyable. Great and lasting acquaintances were made.

What are the most important local issues the chapter is working on?

Our chapter is presently supporting the Port Hope Residents for Managing Waste Responsibly about their health and environmental concerns over a proposed incinerator to be built on the outskirts of Port Hope. The company has no other facility of this size anywhere in the world, so this would be an experiment in Northumberland. It would mean importing garbage from near and far. Our fear is that their emissions will pollute the food chain and increase the likelihood of cancer cases.

Another issue that has drawn our attention is the aging Line 9 oil pipeline, which runs the full length of Northumberland,



extending across southern Ontario and Quebec to carry huge amounts of crude oil from the tar sands of Alberta.

What challenges does the chapter face?

Apathy is a common complaint of chapter members. It takes everyone's shoulder to the wheel to make it work. As activists become stronger and more informed about problems, they take on more issues like GMO food, trade agreements, factory farming and corporate control, which is an education in survival.

What has been your favourite moment with the Council?

My favourite moment was receiving a call from Maude Barlow on my 89th birthday.

What advice would you give to people interested in starting a new chapter?

When starting a new chapter, select local issues that grab attention, being careful to avoid burn-out. You win some and you lose some, but you must never be discouraged.

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