

# Chapter Activist Profile

**Margo Sheppard**  
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Fredericton, a large urban area in the west-central part of New Brunswick, is the province's capital city. The Saint John River runs through the city's centre, giving the community a strong water focus. The city has an active arts and culture scene and a bustling student population. Margo Sheppard is a member of the Fredericton chapter of the Council of Canadians.

## **How did you get involved with the Council of Canadians?**

There was an attempt to start a Fredericton chapter a couple of years ago but it never got off the ground. I was just too busy at that time, and there was no issue that galvanized us. More recently we came together in response to the shale gas (fracking) issue in New Brunswick. Along with wanting to work on this issue, it seemed like a good fit since I've long admired Maude Barlow and her work on water and justice for the less fortunate among us.

## **The Fredericton chapter seems to be involved in many campaigns. Can you tell me a little about them, and how you sustain your energies and stay focused?**

There are a lot of pressing social and environmental issues in New Brunswick. Working with other like-minded people is a good outlet for frustration and anger at misguided government actions and policies. And there's a sense of momentum – like we're making headway.

The chapter is awesome. Our chairperson, J.L. Deveau, is really great at asking all the right questions and taking the decisions we make at the chapter to the next level.

The chapter's main focus since its inception has been shale gas (fracking). We started a campaign to encourage people to send

complaints to the Ombudsman. We've been submitting articles and organizing successful rallies. We've also done some work on an environmental bill of rights for New Brunswick, and more broadly on the need to move to a clean economy, which is eclipsing the work on the Environmental Bill of Rights. And now we are working on the [Energy East] pipeline.

## **What campaigns do you feel particularly passionate about?**

Much of my professional and volunteer career involved protecting natural areas. Climate change is also a direct threat that will negatively impact diversity and coastal communities. Shale gas is part of a campaign to address climate change. It's the thin edge of a wedge, so to speak. I'm hoping we'll defeat the Energy East pipeline.

## **The chapter works with several allies; tell me about this.**

Some allies for shale gas marches to the legislature have included CUPE–New Brunswick, the New Brunswick Nurses' Union and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick. Although [organizing with allies] can be challenging, it's worth it as you have a stronger event and much more unanimity as a result. The chapter has also worked closely with St. Mary's First Nation on shale gas and Elsipogtog this past summer. We're also planning town hall meetings in collaboration with unions and the broader anti-shale gas



movement in the lead-up to the provincial election this fall.

## **Give me a couple of examples of the actions you've been involved in organizing and why you enjoyed them, or how they were effective.**

Two weeks ago I hosted a "right to information" and sign-making meeting in my house, which was very casual and social, but we also got nine right to information requests done to get information on wire-tapping and other things related to the day the RCMP raided the Rexton solidarity camp. We also made about 14 beautiful signs for our next rally. So now we're all set for the next action, be it at the Energy Minister's office or at a public appearance of the Premier.



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