



9 October 2007

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

I am writing on behalf of the Council of Canadians to request that a judicial inquiry be established under the Inquiries Act with respect to the planning and conduct of police and security operations for the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) summit that was held in Montebello, Quebec on August 20-21, 2007.

Efforts by the police to disrupt the peaceful protest taking place on that day, and your government's response to those police actions, raise the most serious questions about your commitment to the principles of free speech and the rights of Canadians to question government policy. Moreover, efforts to drown out voices of dissent at Montebello should be seen in light of other efforts, including those by your office, to frustrate efforts by civil society to foster informed public debate about the SPP.

The Council of Canadians and its thousands of members has been in the forefront of efforts to raise public awareness about the consequences of the SPP agenda. We have organized two well attended teach-ins on the subject, and engaged in numerous activities to bring to light the diverse impacts of the SPP agenda that would weaken environmental standards, abandon sovereign control over Canadian water and energy, and embrace the Bush foreign policy agenda.

Because of their deep concern, many of our members traveled from across the country to attend a teach-in on the SPP we organized on the eve of the Montebello meeting, and to be present in Montebello on August 21. But instead of being allowed to express those concerns at a peaceful protest, I and several Council members were present to observe, and record, a confrontation with three masked policemen attempting to provoke a confrontation between protestors and the police.

Our subsequent complaints about this abuse of police powers were greeted with immediate denials by the police, which your government did nothing to disavow. When, in the face of compelling evidence to the contrary, these denials gave way to grudging admissions, Minister Day suggested that we invoke the review processes of the Surete du Quebec and the RCMP.

The Minister also denies any involvement in security planning for the Montebello summit by his office, or that of the Prime Minister. Yet we were advised by local officials from the town of Papineauville that not only RCMP and the Surete du Quebec, but also U.S. Army security personnel were directly involved in planning security at Montebello. Many Canadians would no doubt share our skepticism about the claim that neither your office nor Minister Day's was involved in security arrangements for visiting heads of state.

It is also vital for police conduct at Montebello to be viewed in context. For us, the deplorable conduct of police as agents provocateurs is consistent with other efforts to squelch attempts to engage your government in a meaningful debate about crucial public policy issues that bear directly on the future of Canada. You personally have trivialized these concerns, even going so far as to characterize the SPP as little more than a project to eliminate frivolous regulations of jelly beans.

Even more problematic is the fact we had to cancel a local teach-in about the SPP when officials from Papineauville advised that they had been instructed by representatives of the RCMP, the Surete du Quebec and the U.S. Army, to cancel their agreement with us for the use of a community centre for the teach-in.

Obviously these events raise the most serious concerns about efforts by police forces, including those from the U.S., to interfere with the rights of Canadians to exercise their rights of free speech.

It is quite apparent that neither of the processes established to review the conduct of the RCMP or Quebec police is adequate to ensure a thorough and comprehensive inquiry into the planning and conduct of security operations at Montebello this past August.

We are aware that other groups have also called for a public inquiry, and some have raised particular concerns about the conduct of police operations leading to and taking place on the day of the Montebello summit. We share these concerns. However, for the Council of Canadians the most important questions do not concern the particulars of police conduct, but rather the role of those responsible for planning and overseeing security operations for the Montebello summit.

Foremost among the questions that must be answered in this regard are the following:

1. Who was responsible for planning and coordination of events at Montebello and to what extent were the offices of the Prime Minister of Canada, and the Premier of Quebec, and their respective departments of public safety, involved in security planning and coordination for the Montebello meeting?
2. In particular, to what extent was the PMO and/or Public Safety Canada involved in the direction of undercover policing operations at Montebello? In particular, was the RCMP made aware that Surete du Quebec officers would be present in disguise and take part in the protest including in the manner depicted on the video taken at the event and subsequently posted to the YouTube site? Were these plans approved in advance of the protest, and by whom?
3. Did the Surete du Quebec and/or the RCMP have any communication concerning security and policing operations for the Montebello meeting with the offices of the Prime Minister of Canada, or the Premier of Quebec?
4. Who was responsible for coordinating with those responsible in the U.S. and Mexico for the security arrangements for their respective Presidents?

5. What steps has the government taken to investigate the allegations and evidence that indicates that police were involved in inciting others in the crowd to violence, including the allegation that can be heard on the video?

6. In addition to the RCMP and Surete du Quebec, were any other police or security forces involved in undercover police work at Montebello? What in particular was the role of the U.S. Army in this regard?

In Montebello, we were confronted by police who were engaged in tactics that were also intended to discredit the same voices of protest about your government's agenda. If all this is simply coincidence, rather than an orchestrated campaign to discredit those who oppose your government's policies and relationship with the Bush Administration, an independent public inquiry is the only way to provide Canadians that assurance.

When similar interference with civil rights occurred at the APEC meeting in Vancouver, the Hughes Inquiry which was subsequently convened to look into those events, stressed the need for "close consultation between those who are representing the host of the event, the government, and those who are responsible for provision of security, the police."

Given Minister Day's assurance that the police acted alone, it is now incumbent on your government to establish how the activities of domestic and foreign security and police forces were supervised at Montebello, to ensure respect for Canadian constitutional values.

On behalf of the Council of Canadians, I therefore express my support for the call already issued by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and La Ligue des Droits, and call upon you to launch an inquiry into the security arrangements related to the Security and Prosperity summit in Montebello, Quebec on August 20-21, 2007.

Yours sincerely,



Maude Barlow  
National Chairperson  
The Council of Canadians

c.c. The Honourable Stephane Dion, Liberal Party

The Honourable Gilles Duceppe, Bloc Quebecois

The Honourable Jack Layton, New Democratic Party

The Honourable Elizabeth May, Green Party of Canada