

IN THE NEWS

by Meera Karunanathan

The Council of Canadians has been very visible in the media over the last few months with World Water Day, a press conference on civil society's priorities for the Harper government, the Prairies water tour and our various interventions on issues like health care, Afghanistan and U.S. war resisters. Here is a brief sampling of how the Council made the news recently.

CANADIANS TAKE FIGHT TO WATER INDUSTRY

The struggle against privatization of the world's water systems has given birth to an international movement unlike any other.

That much was evident yesterday when the fourth World Water Forum ended in Mexico City – on the same day Canadians and people around the world marked the United Nations' annual World Water Day.

Outside the doors of the forum, Canadian organizations such as the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and KAIROS played a key role at the International Forum for the Defence of Water, an alternative gathering where civil society organizations and activists from around the world articulated a different vision for the future of water.

–*Toronto Star*, March 23, 2006

SOCIAL GROUPS URGE TORIES TO BACKTRACK: PRIME MINISTER STEPHEN HARPER SAYS HE'LL STICK TO HIS PRIORITIES

A coalition of social activist groups is urging Stephen Harper to backtrack on



Victoria Gibb-Carsley and Meera Karunanathan of The Council of Canadians with Michelle DeFord and Cindy Sheehan of Gold Star Families for Peace, at a press conference on May 4.

a number of his priority issues, including child care and closer ties with the United States.

The Council of Canadians, Egale, the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, the Child Care Advocacy Association and the Quebec-based Coalition Solidarité Santé all say Prime Minister Harper is out of step with most Canadians.

–*Canadian Press*, March 31, 2006, printed in 16 papers

AFGHANISTAN DEBATE

As members of Parliament prepare to debate Canada's role in Afghanistan, the prime minister is being urged to hold a vote on the military mission. A debate on Canada's involvement in Afghanistan is scheduled for tonight in the Commons.

A new Decima Research poll shows Canadians evenly divided over whether having troops in Afghanistan is a good or bad idea. The Council of Canadians says other recent polls have shown little public support for Canada's expanded mission in the volatile south Asian country.

And Council organizer Brent Patterson says with the casualty rate of Canadian soldiers mounting, the federal govern-

ment should not make decisions about the mission unilaterally.

–*Broadcast News*, April 10, 2006, broadcast on 21 radio stations across Canada

THE PATIENT'S POINT OF VIEW: QUEBEC WOMAN SAYS SHE'S GLAD TO PAY AFTER 2 1/2 YEARS OF WAITING IN PAIN

Critics also deplored access to private insurance for hip and knee replacements and cataract surgeries, saying it will result in the creation of a two-tier health-care system in Quebec that will be more expensive in the long run.

The \$20 million a year the province plans to spend to eliminate waiting lists should be poured into improving the public health system, said Guy Caron, spokesperson for the Council of Canadians, an Ottawa-based non-profit citizens' advocacy group.

"We're disappointed the plan favoured by the government is going in a direction that's least imaginative," Caron said.

–*The Montreal Gazette*, February 17, 2006

U.S. ACTIVIST PRESSURES CANADA

Canada's deployment of 2,300 soldiers to Afghanistan simply "frees up more [U.S.] soldiers to be in Iraq," [Cindy] Sheehan said.

Ms. Sheehan and Canadian activists from the Council of Canadians and the War Resisters Support Campaign also called on Prime Minister Stephen Harper to "open the border" to U.S. military deserters.

"I believe our war resisters are legitimate refugees," Ms. Sheehan said.

–*The Globe and Mail*, May 5, 2006

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