

CHAPTER ACTION UPDATE



Doug Hayes

by Brent Patterson

DAY OF ACTION AGAINST THE SPP

Thirty-two chapters participated across Canada in our National Day of Action Against the Security and Prosperity Partnership. Activities included organizing rallies and marches, handing out fact sheets, writing letters to the editor, phoning in to talk-radio programs, doing media interviews, organizing public forums and video screenings, developing creative skits and actions, and meeting with Members of Parliament. Numerous chapters appeared on the radio and even on the front page of their local newspapers.

SUMMIT IN MONTEBELLO

Nine chapters (from as far as British Columbia and Prince Edward Island) were present in Montebello, Quebec, on August 20 for the so-called Security and Prosperity Partnership “Leaders’ Summit,” as well as in Ottawa the

Chapter activists in Windsor, Ontario braved the August rain to protest against the SPP.

day before for the massive rally on Parliament Hill and our public forum at the University of Ottawa. It was a tremendous moment for us to march together and deliver more than 10,000 letters from Council supporters to the line of riot police outside the Chateau Montebello.

CHAPTER CAUCUS DAY

Chapter activists will be gathering in Kelowna, British Columbia, for a full-day meeting with other chapter activists from right across the country for our annual Chapter Caucus day. This is always a tremendous opportunity for a chapter representative from each of our 72 chapters across the country to discuss the grassroots political work of the Council of Canadians and how to best advance our campaigns and organizing work.

BLUE COVENANT BOOK TOUR

Chapters have already begun organizing for the upcoming *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water* book tour, which will take Maude Barlow to more than 18 communities across Canada starting on October 17 and wrapping up on November 22. The formal book launch for *Blue Covenant* will take place at the Council of Canadians’ annual general meeting in Kelowna this October.

ATLANTICA

On June 13, Atlantic region chapters were involved in organizing activities in opposing Atlantica, a proposal by the Atlantic Provinces Chamber of Commerce and the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies to integrate the easternmost provinces with northeastern United States. More than 300 people came out to hear Maude Barlow speak in Halifax against Atlantica, which we argue is a part of the larger Security and Prosperity Partnership integration agenda.

TAKING IT TO THE PREMIERS

On June 26, Charlottetown chapter activist Leo Broderick and others demonstrated against the meeting of New England governors and Eastern Canadian premiers in Prince Edward Island. The *Montreal Gazette* even reported that Broderick found an opening to express his views directly to Quebec Premier Jean Charest about Atlantica, reinforcing the Council of Canadians’ opposition to the plan.

A FALL ELECTION?

With Prime Minister Stephen Harper proroguing Parliament to October 16, and a Throne Speech and confidence vote to follow, Canadians could potentially be facing a late fall or early winter

federal election. If that's the case, the Council of Canadians and its chapter activists will be well prepared to engage in a non-partisan way in the political process. In previous elections, chapters have organized all-candidates debates, handed out voters' guides, translated materials into different languages, commissioned billboards and much more. A key aim for the Council will be to ensure that the Security and Prosperity Partnership is a central issue in this election.

ON ALERT

Chapter activists continue to respond to the Council's Action Alerts by sending their letters to the Prime Minister, key Cabinet ministers, their local MPs, and



The Council's Lyn Gorman with Tim Murphy from the Sierra Youth coalition, one of the participants in the To the Tar Sands bike tour.

to various listservs so that even more people will respond. To send your letter of concern opposing the no-fly list, supporting the Terminator Seed ban, calling on the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan to divest from Chilean for-profit water companies and much more, and to add your voice to the many demanding the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan, please visit our website at www.canadians.org.

Brent Patterson is the Director of Campaigns/Organizing at the Council of Canadians.

ACTIVISM IN THE ALBERTA HEARTLAND

NEW CHAPTER SHINES A LIGHT ON THE IMPACT OF THE TAR SANDS

On August 29, 2007, the newly formed Sturgeon/Strathcona chapter of the Council of Canadians hosted a barbecue for the "To the Tar Sands" cycling group. This group of young cyclists from across Canada travelled from the Alberta-U.S. border to Fort MacKay, Alberta. They spoke to people along the way, gathering footage for a documentary on how the tar sands impact the lives of Albertans and their communities.

The members of the Sturgeon/Strathcona chapter live and work in the middle of Alberta's Industrial Heartland, an area approximately 30 kilometres northeast of Edmonton where over 300 square km of prime agricultural land has been rezoned for heavy industrial use. Industry in this area consists of chemical plants, fertilizer plants, and other petro-chemical industries including refineries and upgraders.

At the barbecue, chapter members had the opportunity to share with the cyclists the many challenges they face living so close to the tar sands, including poor air quality and toxic fumes. They spoke about the many ways they have intervened to keep an eye on the oil industry, including applying for intervener status with the Alberta Energy and Utility Board when plants make application to build, attending numerous meetings and information sessions

(often several times a week), and standing up to corporate bullies who try to silence community members' concerns.

The barbecue was a huge success, with close to 50 people in attendance. Anne Brown, chapter representative for Sturgeon/Strathcona, said, "This event was great for our members. It brought us closer together and let us see we are not alone in our concerns with the pace and amount of heavy industrial petro-chemical development."

Ryan McGinn, a representative of the University of Alberta chapter, agreed.

"These people are amazing and so brave. We have to admire people who have no science background and take it upon themselves to learn about the content of these emissions, what amounts are considered safe, and the impact on humans and the environment."

The Council of Canadians chapters in Alberta will spend this year advocating for stringent and enforceable environmental standards in the tar sands, continuing the Council's long tradition of keeping corporations in check and standing up for the rights of citizens and the environment.

- Lyn Gorman, Prairies Regional Organizer