

Taking Charge! Council hosts second annual Energy Day of Action



Ashlea Hegedus-Viola submitted the winning entry for the Council's "Tar Sands Mash-up" competition. Her submission of "Closer than they appear" captured the looming sentiment of the expanding tar sands development.



by **Andrea Harden-Donahue**

Council of Canadians activists took

to the streets on a cold day in February to voice their support for a Canadian energy strategy.

Faced with climate change and diminishing energy resources globally, we are at a critical juncture for energy policy. Now, more than ever, we need a Canadian energy strategy that ensures energy security and helps transition to sustainable energy production and consumption. That is why the Council of Canadians organized the second annual Take Charge! A National Day of Action to Demand a Canadian Energy Strategy on Wednesday, February 4, 2009.

Given the political moment heading into 2009, the featured topics for the Energy Day of Action were energy, and the North American Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA) and the tar sands. NAFTA and free market policies limit the ability of the Canadian government to intervene in energy trade issues except in extraordinary circumstances. This has fostered an energy gold rush with serious social and environmental consequences. On a recent tour to Alberta's tar sands, a number of Council staff and chapter volunteers witnessed first-hand the dramatic impacts of a market-based energy policy. Without a strategy that provides security of energy supplies, guarantees access to energy reserves in times of need, and establishes strong policies that protect our environment and focus on finding alternative, less harmful energy solutions, our country will continue to be the victim of this energy gold rush.

Through activities such as hosting public events, leafleting, collecting signatures on petitions and creating a presence in the media, chapters across the country helped to raise public awareness of energy issues and the need for

a Canadian energy strategy. This year's Day of Action marked the launch of a national campaign to collect municipal, provincial and federal politicians' signatures for a declaration in support of a Canadian energy strategy. By collecting signatures, chapters are helping to build a groundswell of support across the country for an energy strategy based on the principles of energy security and ecological sustainability.

In the spirit of the "games" theme for the Day of Action – underscoring that a market-based approach to energy policy is tantamount to playing games, or gambling with our future – the Council of Canadians hosted a tar sands photo mash-up competition, challenging contestants to creatively use one of our images of the tar sands to convey a message.

Thank you to everyone who helped us "Take Charge!" and make this year's Energy Day of Action a success.

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