

Chapter Action Updates



By Carleen Pickard

ANNUAL REGIONAL MEETINGS A SUCCESS!

Through late March and April chapters across the country met regionally in Montreal, Tatamagouche, Vancouver and Regina to share the year's activities and successes and to plan for the future year. Regional offices were instrumental in setting up terrific agendas with in-depth discussions, guest speakers and strategy sessions. Many topics were covered at the meetings. Speakers addressed local community organizing, public health care in Quebec, Atlantic energy issues and the need for a Canadian Energy Strategy (the Council's Energy Campaigner, Andrea Harden-Donahue, presented), international and national responses to the economic crisis, and problems with the Colombia-Canada free trade agreement. There were also discussions about the development of alternative media (including The Dominion paper, an on-line resource that you can find at www.dominionpaper.ca), a primer on the economic crisis in the United States and Canada, strategies for organizing and participating in government-held public hearings, and ways to work effectively in communities through an anti-oppression framework.

Additionally, chapters from the Ontario/Quebec region participated in a noontime rally on March 28 to protest the G-20 meeting in the United Kingdom. Regional

Atlantic chapter activists converged in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia this spring for their regional meeting where discussions were focused on Atlantic energy issues.



Organizer Stuart Trew addressed the rally on behalf of the Council of Canadians, denouncing the summit's closed door meetings without public participation. He also warned protesters of the imminent Canada-EU trade agreement discussions to be held by our country.

As Director of Organizing, it was wonderful to attend these meetings, hear inspiring stories and feel our collective power! Thanks to everyone who helped out, participated and made these meetings a success.

THE DEBATE CONTINUES

In mid-March chapters in Saskatchewan hosted "The Great Tar Sands Debate" in nine different communities, including Regina, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert, among others. Andrew Nikiforuk, author of *Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent* (and presenter at our 2008 annual general meeting in Edmonton) debated Dr. Carolyn Preston, the Executive Director of the Petroleum Technology Research Centre in Regina, to provide insight on the opposing views of the tar sands development debate.

RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

The Courtney-Comox chapter in British Columbia recently presented local Food Not Bombs activists with their annual Council of Canadians award. Food Not Bombs is a global organization that provides free and healthy food to anyone

Chapter activists from British Columbia show their copies of the newly-redesigned Canadian Perspectives magazine at their regional meeting this spring. Activists also shared strategies and plans for community and political engagement.



who needs it through regular community events. Recognizing the increase in poverty and homelessness in their community, our Courtney-Comox chapter chose to highlight the contributions of this direct service organization. You can read the full story of Food Not Bombs at www.foodnotbombs.net.

BLUE COMMUNITIES - ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

March 22 was World Water Day and to mark it, chapters across Canada helped launch our Blue Communities Project and held more than 50 events to put the spotlight on water issues across the country.

Chapter activists from the Prairies region discussed proposed nuclear expansion and ways to effectively counter the environmentally and socially destructive tar sands during their recent regional meeting.





The Blue Communities Project encourages communities to adopt a water commons framework that recognizes the human right to water, promotes publicly financed, owned and operated water and waste water services, and bans the sale of bottled water in public facilities and at municipal events. Over the next year we'll be working hard to "blue" communities by obtaining municipal resolutions on these issues.

We look forward to naming the first Blue Community – will it be yours? For more information on World Water Day and the Blue Communities Project visit www.canadians.org/water/issues/World_Water_Day

FLOW SCREENED IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Our St. John's chapter in Newfoundland and Labrador recently screened the movie *FLOW (For Love of Water)*. Chapter contact Ken Kavanagh wrote in to say, "Anywhere from 80 to 85 people attended. There was hearty applause at the end and there were several heartfelt and supportive questions and comments during a 40-minute dialogue session after ... I was so pleased with the reaction of the audience both during the showing and during the dialogue session ... All in all, *FLOW* is a great piece of valuable work that needs to be shown widely. It was a great night."

Each regional office has DVD copies of the film to lend out for chapter events. We are also encouraged that the St. John's chapter and other chapters are making plans to show *FLOW* in high schools and other venues.

IN MEMORIAM

Ottawa chapter activist Jeremy Wright passed away on March 8. Jeremy was a committed chapter activist dedicated to better Canada, and will be remembered fondly for his work as a chapter contact. He routinely participated at our annual general meetings and at Ontario-Quebec regional meetings. We extend our condolences to Jeremy's family, friends and fellow Ottawa chapter activists.

PLANS AFOOT IN NEW BRUNSWICK

The Council of Canadians' annual general meeting will be held in Saint John, New Brunswick, this October. Board member and chapter activist Leticia Adair recently hosted a round table meeting with chapter members and activists to introduce opportunities for working together to outreach to the community in Saint John and the Atlantic region. Lots of great ideas were generated and we look forward to welcoming chapters from across Canada to the region.

Ontario and Quebec chapter activists took part in a demonstration against the G20 Summit as part of their regional meeting.

YOU, ME AND THE SPP – NOW RELEASED!

Chapter activists from across the country are familiar with asking the public if they are aware of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP). Once the SPP is explained, people to learn more and find out how they can get involved. A new film called *You, Me and the SPP* explains it all. Documentary director Paul Manley opens the film by asking residents in Nanaimo, B.C.: "Have you heard of the Security and Prosperity Partnership?" He gets universal blank stares in response. The film then uncovers, unpacks and unravels who is behind the secretive tri-lateral agreement between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico – and shows who is for it and who is against it. Many chapters supported Paul with the development of this film and will be receiving a copy in the mail shortly. It's a great tool for chapter activists to screen in communities and start discussions. For more information about the video visit www.youmespp.com.

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