

In the News



By Dylan Penner

The tremendous work of Council of Canadians chapter volunteers and staff continues to ensure our messages reach local media on an ongoing basis across the country. The Council of Canadians made headlines in recent months opposing a variety of harmful trade deals and attacks on civil liberties, and campaigning for a Canadian energy strategy and for water to be recognized as a human right. We spoke out against the burgeoning tar sands and their harmful impacts and about privacy concerns with new Quebec drivers' licences. The Council also made international headlines by bringing attention to the world's water crisis at the World Water Forum in Istanbul, Turkey, and in Australia, a country dealing with crippling droughts. Here are some recent highlights:

Tar Sands bring their record to B.C.

The Alberta Tar Sands. That gummy substance that means so much to the Alberta and Canadian economy has a side much darker than its tarry tincture – one which is oozing into B.C.

Helping to reveal the underside of what is now the world's biggest industrial development was a presentation put on in Salmon Arm Sunday by journalist Dawn Paley and Council of Canadians rep Harjap Grewal.

The Chipewyan First Nation, one of five bands in the area, knows well how water has been affected. As one elder remarked, no one drinks the water or catches fish anymore. The bile duct cancer rate of the Chipewyans is 300 times above normal.

Grewal noted that the Athabasca River flows north through the Chipewyan First Nation. If it flowed south to Edmonton and was producing such cancer rates there, he speculated, the Tar Sands project would be shut down in a day. Instead, a sign posted on a community bulletin board speaks volumes: "Any concerns regarding the smell or taste of your water, please call environmental health."

Interestingly, Grewal points out, Gordon Campbell's "greenest Games ever" are sponsored in part by the biggest backers and financiers of the Tar Sands project.



Maude Barlow speaks with the media following the recent march and rally to protect Site 41 in Simcoe County in Ontario. Maude, along with thousands of others, is against proposed plans to put a dump site on a local aquifer.

At the federal level, Stephen Harper is negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with Colombia. This is the same government that is providing millions of dollars of subsidies to the Tar Sands. The biggest proponents of the Colombia deal? The oil and gas companies involved in the tar sands.

*Reprinted with permission of the **Salmon Arm Observer**, April 7, 2009*

"Failure of vision" on water crisis

Australian governments had failed the "vision" test by investing with "cult-like faith" in flawed technology to avert the national water crisis, a top UN adviser claimed yesterday.

Maude Barlow, a Canadian water expert who last October was named the UN's senior adviser on water issues, said the price for this lack of vision was being paid by ordinary Australians and farmers.

She accused federal and state governments of having "no overall plan" to save Australia's water heritage. Instead, governments had clung to a "vague belief in the magic of markets and kneeling at the throne of big technology."

"The only sectors being asked to make a sacrifice are home owners, who really make up a very small share of the water problem, and small farmers, who cannot compete with their larger competitors," Ms. Barlow told policymakers and industry leaders at the Australian Water Summit in Sydney yesterday.

*Reprinted with permission of **The Australian**, April 2, 2009*

Licence plus an invasion of privacy?

Last week the province unveiled a new version of the Quebec driver's licence.

The major difference with "licence plus" is the inclusion of an electronic chip that contains a unique code. A border agent will scan the card and the code will enable them to pull up your personal details. The chip, called a radio frequency identification chip, can be scanned from up to 10 metres away...

"This program will essentially enroll Canadians into a national ID program developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security," Stuart Trew, regional organizer of the Ontario and Quebec branch of the Council of Canadians, told ITBusiness.ca.

At one point during his press event, Charest said that since 9/11 "security trumps trade." And privacy?

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