

Chapter Action Updates



By Carleen Pickard

MESSAGE TO POLITICIANS: TAKE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

As Canada's Conservative government blocked meaningful action on climate change at the UN conference in Copenhagen, activists in Canada took their message directly to politicians. Council chapter members in Alberta participated in a series of sit-ins as part of a national effort to pressure the Canadian government to commit to ambitious, fair and binding emission reductions, joining in actions at the offices of Environment Minister Jim Prentice, Edmonton MP Rona Ambrose and Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

CHALLENGING SCOTT BRISON IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Annapolis Valley chapter, along with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op and local residents, hosted a panel discussion in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, about the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (CCFTA). The next day more than 80 people rallied in front of MP and Liberal Trade critic Scott Brison's office. Participants demanded that Brison retract his recent statement claiming paramilitary violence no longer exists in Colombia. The proposed CCFTA deal has been widely criticized because of Colombia's appalling human rights record.

PEROGIES NOT PROROGUING!

In opposition to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to close Parliament for the second time in less than a year, anti-proroguing protests were big across Canada, with chapters both taking part and organizing them at the end of January. In Guelph, Ontario, the chapter had a "Perogies not Proroguing!" event that drew more than 300 people. For a full list of the events, including report-backs and pictures, visit our website at www.canadians.org/prorogue.

FACING THE TAR SANDS

At the end of January, the University of Alberta chapter helped organize a student trip to Fort McMurray and the tar sands. Thirty student delegates from Edmonton were able to see the reality of the tar sands, which are located six hours north of the city. The itinerary included driving by some of the projects, a discussion with Suncor representatives, a visit to the Oil Sands Discovery Centre and a panel discussion. The trip was a resounding success and each student leader will take back the experience to their respective campus groups. The delegation is working together to continue the discussion back on campus with a written report and a conference.

THE OLYMPICS COME TO TOWN, AS DOES THE RESISTANCE

With the Council of Canadians taking a stand to highlight the negative impacts of the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler, chapters in the Lower Mainland sponsored public education events across British Columbia. In mid-January chapters in Nelson, Golden, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Comox Valley and Powell River hosted Regional Organizer Harjap Grewal and other speakers who presented the "other side" of the Olympics, including the issues of corporate sponsorship by Coke, Royal Bank of Canada and other multinational corporations, increased surveillance and crackdowns on civil liberties, unaddressed poverty in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and the legacy of public expenditure and debt that will remain long after the Olympics leave town. The Vancouver chapter hosted author and Olympics critic Chris Shaw, who spoke about the Olympics' "myths and realities."

The Council of Canadians was one of more than 50 organizations that endorsed the "Take Back Our City!" festival and march in Vancouver that brought an estimated 3,000 people, including a number of chapter activists, board members and staff, to the site of the opening ceremonies in opposition to the negative impacts of the 2010 Games.



Thirty University of Alberta students joined the on-campus Council chapter to see the tar sands in Fort McMurray last December. Students visited the Oil Sands Discovery Centre, met with Suncor representatives, and had panel discussions about the negative social and environmental impacts of the massive projects.

WELCOME TO NEW CHAPTERS

A big welcome to two new chapters in Ontario — Simcoe Region and Ottawa — and one in British Columbia — Columbia Valley! Members of the Simcoe Region chapter came together after our collective efforts to defeat the dump site proposed for Site 41, which threatened to contaminate the Alliston aquifer. People decided that a Council of Canadians chapter would help maintain our presence in the region. The chapter will focus on promoting a Zero Waste strategy and ensuring the county doesn't backtrack on its decision to block Site 41. Ottawa and Columbia Valley chapters are just getting their feet wet, and we look forward to lots of work and fun together. To get involved in any of the local chapters and take action in your community, get in touch with the contact person listed on page 27 of this issue of *Canadian Perspectives*, or with a Council of Canadians regional organizer.

FINAL SHOUT OUT

... goes to Delta/Richmond chapter chair Cathy Wilander, who co-authored an opinion editorial in the Lower Mainland weekly *Georgia Straight* titled "Scrub the greenwash off the Freeway Olympics." The article highlighted the contradiction in calling the 2010 Olympics the "greenest games ever" while the Lower Mainland pushes ahead with freeway expansion and development. *Bravo!*

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