

Chapter Action Updates



by Brent Patterson

Challenging the destructive tar sands

Council of Canadians staff, board members, chapter activists and members joined with hundreds of people on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on September 26 to say “No!” to the environmentally destructive tar sands. Chapter activists from Quebec, Ontario and Alberta waved Council banners and signs, delivering a strong message to Prime Minister Harper that the tar sands operations are poisoning local waterways, land and air. Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow, Council staff and several chapter activists were among the 200 arrested that day in a peaceful showing of mass civil disobedience.

Chapters secure CETA resolutions

Months of diligent work by our chapters and allies has resulted in a wave of municipal councils, school boards and other organizations passing resolutions demanding public transparency about what the federal and provincial governments are putting on the table in negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the EU. Resolutions questioning and opposing CETA are being passed across Canada.

Over the past several months, 13 municipal resolutions have been passed in Nova Scotia (Lunenburg), in Ontario (Brantford, Alnwick/Haldimand, Trent Hills, Asphodel-Norwood, Tecumseh, Windsor-Essex, Brockville and London), and in British Columbia (Logan Lake, Burnaby, North Vancouver and Trail), thanks in large part to the grassroots efforts of chapter activists and Council members.

Fracking fights across Canada

Council chapters have been active in the fight against fracking, a controversial drilling process used to extract natural gas

from shale, coal beds and “tight sands” with vertical and horizontal drilling. In Lethbridge, Alberta, chapter members joined a protest calling on the provincial government to ban fracking in the province. Fracking operations contaminate water and have been linked to serious health concerns. Protesters supported calls from First Nations Blood tribe members to stop fracking projects on their lands.

Members of the Inverness County chapter brought their concerns about fracking to Nova Scotia’s Environment Minister after the province’s Department of Energy gave PetroWorth Resources the green light to drill an exploratory well in West Lake Ainslie. They also presented to their municipal council, opposing a proposal to sell city water to PetroWorth for drilling operations.

In New Brunswick, chapter members from Moncton, Saint John and Tantramar marched to city hall chanting “No!” to hydro-fracking and shale gas exploration in the province. Chapters are part of a growing movement trying to stop the invasive and polluting drilling practice.

Celebrating Blue Communities

Communities are turning “blue” right across Canada. Chapters have been promoting the Blue Communities Project in their hometowns, encouraging municipalities to recognize water as a human right, ban the sales of bottled water in public facilities and at municipal events, and commit to promoting publicly financed, owned and operated water and wastewater services.

The Blue Communities initiative is a joint venture between the Council of Canadians and CUPE and, in Quebec, Eau Secours, and is aimed at strengthening public water use. The initiative was supported in British Columbia recently, as municipal leaders from across the

province voted overwhelmingly in favour of a Blue Communities resolution at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities conference. The resolution shows strong support across B.C. for the idea of developing more Blue Communities.

With strong lobbying from local chapter members, four B.C. communities – Burnaby, Victoria, Port Alberni and Mission – have already become Blue Communities. Tiny Township in Ontario is now a Blue Community and Kingston, Ontario, and Pointe Claire, Quebec, are also on their way to becoming “blue.”

More than 600 people filled the gymnasium at the Isfeld Secondary School in Courtenay, British Columbia, to hear Council of Canadians Chairperson Maude Barlow and lawyer and author Leo McGrady speak about peaceful direct action in Canada. The two-day event was meant to encourage ordinary citizens to fulfill their responsibility to get up and act when governments fail to listen.

Chapter joins coalition for direct action conference

The coalition, which was formed by local groups, including the Council’s Comox Valley chapter, brought together people who are interested in building more awareness about the benefits of peaceful direct action. The coalition used the event to educate the public on its rights and responsibilities during peaceful protests and direct actions. Workshops gave people tools, ideas and information to organize their own actions.

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