



E-newsletter, December 2006



The Council of Canadians is kicking it into high gear as we enter the new year with lots of exciting projects underway. We are in the midst of planning a teach-in called *Integrate This! Challenging the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America*, that will take place in Ottawa from March 30th to April 1st. We are working with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Labour Congress to bring together activists, artists and academics to challenge deep integration and imagine a better course for Canada's relationship with the United States. Keep checking our website at www.canadians.org for more information on the teach-in.

The Council's chapters are celebrating the end of a busy and productive year. Our local activists were involved in organizing a 30-city speaking tour called *Medicare Works! Keep it Public, Keep it Fair*, in partnership with the Canadian Health Coalition. This capped off the more than 285 public events that our chapters organized in over 70 cities in 2006. To read more about the Council's on-the-ground actions, or to join your local chapter, [click here](#).

Here's what's new this month at www.canadians.org:

Court upholds corporate rights under NAFTA

On December 1st, the Ontario Court of Appeal upheld the constitutionality of NAFTA, denying the Council of Canadians' argument that investor-state litigation infringes on the jurisdiction of domestic courts and the Canadian constitution.

While the Council of Canadians is disappointed with the Court's decision, we remain committed to defending Canadian independence against the incursions of NAFTA, and fighting the new threat posed by the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. The Council will also consider taking steps to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. [Click here](#) to read the Council of Canadians' analysis of the Court's decision.

Another acronym to learn, another trade agreement to fight

We thought we'd seem them all – NAFTA, FTAA, WTO, GATS – different acronyms, but the same system of unfair trade. But there's a new one to learn and to fight: TILMA. In April 2006, without public consultation or legislative debate, the premiers of Alberta and British Columbia signed an unprecedented inter-provincial free trade deal called the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement.

This deal extends NAFTA-like privileges to Canadian corporations, allowing them to sue provincial and municipal governments for any regulation deemed harmful to their profits. Under TILMA, even policies designed to protect the environment and public health are vulnerable to attack from corporate lawsuits.

[Click here](#) to find out how you can join in the fight against TILMA.

Council of Canadians stops private ER in its tracks – for now

On Thursday November 30, the Council of Canadians sent out an action alert, urging our supporters to help prevent the first private emergency room from opening in Vancouver. Within three days, Council members and allies sent 480 letters to B.C. Health Minister George Abbott and federal Health Minister Tony Clement. And while we didn't succeed in preventing the clinic from opening, the clinic did announce that it would not charge patients for emergency services.



As Guy Caron, the Council's Health Care Campaigner, commented, "This is not a perfect solution, as we are witnessing the birth of a new private, for-profit clinic instead of a public, or not-for-profit clinic. But on the other hand, an imminent threat to medicare has been avoided – for now."

[Click here](#) to read more about the private ER, and visit [here](#) to find out how to join our Profit is Not the Cure campaign.

New Council youth chapter in North Battleford, SK

The Council of Canadians' **first youth chapter** was formed in North Battleford, Saskatchewan in September 2006. The name of the chapter is Sakewew Awasisak, which means Rising Youth in Cree. The students are currently working on water issues in indigenous communities. They have invited a guest speaker from the Indigenous Environmental Network to talk to them this month. Following this presentation they will be organizing a World Water Day event to be held in North Battleford.



[Click here](#) to find out how you can join your local chapter of the Council of Canadians – or start a new one.

ACTION ALERT: Demand accountability from the Harper government

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's promise of "accountability" appears to be a false one. With U.S. president George Bush and Mexican president Felipe Calderón coming to Canada within mere months to discuss key aspects of North American integration, it is only fair that the people of Canada know more about what is planned and have a greater opportunity to express their views on this matter.

[Click here](#) to send a letter to Prime Minister Harper, demanding that he end the government secrecy around deep integration talks with the U.S.

Join the Council of Canadians today!

Founded in 1985 by a handful of citizens including Farley Mowat and Pierre Berton, the Council of Canadians is Canada's pre-eminent public watchdog organization. The Council receives no money from government, corporations or any political party. To preserve our complete independence, we ensure that almost all our revenue comes from generous individuals like you. **Join the Council** today, and help us prove that a better Canada is possible.

Signing up / Signing off

Please visit our site to sign up for more information from the Council.