



E-Newsletter, December 2007



Take Charge! Council to Demand a National Energy Strategy

Is it cold enough for you? With many in Eastern Canada digging out after this weekend's record-setting snowfall and all of us facing the coldest winter in 15 years, it's no wonder that you may be thinking about how to heat your home this month. We certainly need secure supplies of energy to get us through another Canadian winter.

But right now, Canada does not have a national energy strategy that addresses how we get our energy, where it is going, or the high price of environmental devastation that can come with producing it.

Our country is rich with energy resources, but Canadians do not have control over them. The federal government signed that control away under **NAFTA**. This was demonstrated recently by a lawsuit launched by American oil corporations Exxon-Mobil and Murphy Oil. The companies are suing the Canadian government for \$60 million US, contesting the requirement for them to spend a fraction of their soaring profits from the Atlantic region on research and job development there.

And the Harper government's commitment to the **Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP)** means even less control over our energy resources. The SPP moves Canada closer to a continental resource pact that means secure energy resources for the U.S., while the future energy needs of Canadians are left anything but secure.

Without a Canadian Energy Strategy – a strategy that would ensure Canadians security of supply, guaranteed access to energy reserves in times of need and strong protections for the environment – our country will continue to be a victim of an energy gold rush. Politicians continue to let corporations and the market set the agenda, focusing on big business needs, and privatizing public services, while ignoring the energy security needs of Canadians.

That's why on February 2, 2008, Council activists from across the country will be participating in **Take Charge! A National Day of Action to Demand a Canadian Energy Strategy**. Visit our website at www.canadians.org/energy/action today to find out how you can get involved.

Meanwhile, here's what's new at the Council of Canadians:

- **Victory! Public pressure kills TILMA enforcement bill in BC**
- **Council calls on governments to investigate "double-dipping" clinics**
- **Action Alert: Tell Harper to stand up for the right to water!**
- **Find us on Facebook**
- **This holiday season, give the gift of social and economic justice**

Victory! Public pressure kills TILMA enforcement bill in BC

Council activists in British Columbia celebrated last month, after the B.C. government was forced to drop a piece of legislation that would have allowed the government to pay out public money to investors in a private court set up under the **Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA)**.

TILMA is a top-down trade agreement between B.C. and Alberta that will dramatically impact the ability of municipalities and school boards to maintain any regulations that could be deemed by businesses as 'impairing or restricting' their investment. TILMA allows investors to sue governments for upwards of \$5 million.

"The Minister of Economic Development has been unable to justify the need for TILMA to British Columbians. It's an agreement which will result in the imposition of massive deregulation and policy harmonization for local government," said Carleen Pickard, B.C./Yukon Regional Organizer for the Council of Canadians.

Legislators were denied any debate on TILMA, when the agreement was signed with little fanfare in April 2007. Citizens across B.C. have been collecting petition signatures demanding a debate on the controversial agreement. They also urged legislators not to pass Bill 17, which would have enshrined TILMA's corporate dispute-settlement mechanism into law.

For more information on what you can do to help stop TILMA in its tracks, visit the Council of Canadians' website at www.canadians.org/TILMA today.

Council calls on governments to investigate "double-dipping" clinics

As reported by **the Tyee**, doctors at the Copeman Healthcare Centre in downtown Vancouver have billed the province's Medical Services Plan close to \$500,000 for health care services to "member" patients.

Patients at the Copeman clinic are required to pay a membership fee of \$3,900 for the first year and \$2,900 for subsequent years. Don Copeman, the owner of the clinic, says the fee covers "extra" services, such as personal coaching, counselling, and diet advice that aren't covered under the public insurance plan.

The controversial clinic was recently investigated and exonerated by the B.C. Medical Services Commission (MSC), a government body, for violating the B.C. Medicare Protection Act and the Canada Health Act.

Critics, including the Council of Canadians, maintain that the Copeman clinic violates health care law by charging patients fees before they can see a doctor and get medically necessary services. Both B.C. law and the Canada Health Act prohibit doctors from charging patients money in order to access health care services.

In a **media release** on November 30, the Council of Canadians criticized the B.C. government's complacency on the activities of private clinics and called for the full and immediate release of the investigation into the Copeman Healthcare Centre. Council of Canadians' chapter activists have protested private clinics and sent their concerns directly to Premier Gordon Campbell, calling for provincial government intervention.

The Council has also called on the federal government for leadership on the issue.

"The federal government is responsible for enforcing the Canada Health Act, but has been silent on the proliferation of private clinics, not only in B.C., but across the country," said Guy Caron, Health Care Campaigner for the Council of Canadians. "There is no leadership opposing privatization, and these private clinics continue to charge people

money to access medically necessary services. Where is the federal government?”

To learn more about how you can help preserve and protect public health care, visit our **Profit is Not the Cure** website at www.ProfitisNotTheCure.ca today.

Action Alert: Tell Harper to stand up for the right to water!

There is no denying that a global water crisis is underway. Around the world, over 1.2 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water and this number is rising, and another 4 billion lack adequate sanitation services. In some parts of the global south, children die at the rate of one every 15 seconds due to easily preventable water-related diseases.

Everyone deserves the right to clean, safe, publicly-accessible water. But believe it or not, the Canadian government doesn't seem to agree.

At the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2002 and again in 2003, Canada was the only country to vote against resolutions on the human right to water. The Canadian government has declared that water is an important issue, and that countries are responsible for ensuring that their own populations have access to water, but Canada has clearly stated that it does not believe that international law should recognize the existence of a right to water. To add to our shame, this year the Harper government voted against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Meanwhile, Canada's opposition to the right to water has been rebuked by Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Miloon Kothari, the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing.

“Simply put: life requires access to clean water; to deny the right to water is to deny the right to life,” writes Maude Barlow, in her new book *Blue Covenant*. “The fight for the right to water is an idea whose time has come. It has become the rallying cry of the water justice movement.”

Stand up for the right to water today. Visit our new **Right to Water Action Centre** at www.RightToWater.ca, and send a letter to Prime Minister Harper (and your MP), demanding that the Canadian government support the right to water at the United Nations. Help us send as many letters as possible by World Water Day on March 22, 2008.

Find us on Facebook

Attention Facebook addicts! The Council of Canadians has hit Facebook by storm, and now hundreds of supporters are connected to us – and to each other – through the popular social-networking site.

Visit www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2228697837 to join the **Council of Canadians'** group on **Facebook**, and don't forget to visit the **Integrate This!** group at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2232680931, and the one set up to help **Derail TILMA in Ontario** at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2389227930.

Also, stay up-to-date on Council chairperson **Maude Barlow's** latest travels and speaking engagements, by adding her as a friend on Facebook at www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=15248495067.

This holiday season, give the gift of social and economic justice

Are you still scrambling to find the perfect gift for a loved one?

Consider giving a Council of Canadians gift membership to friends and family members. It sure beats standing in line at the mall!

You will be helping the Council work to promote public health care, clean water, fair trade and energy security. You'll also be providing your loved one with an opportunity to learn more about how to get involved in the fight for a better Canada and a more just world.

When you give someone a membership in the Council of Canadians, we will prepare a package that includes:

- a personalized holiday card advising them of your gift;
- the most recent issue of our informative magazine, *Canadian Perspectives*, and other current campaign information;
- a membership card.

Visit our website at www.canadians.org/join/gift.html today for more information, or contact our membership department at 1-800-387-7177 if you have any questions.

Thank you for helping us to bring about a better Canada and a fairer world. Happy holidays!

Join the Council of Canadians today!

Founded in 1985 by a handful of citizens including Farley Mowat, Pierre Berton and Margaret Atwood, 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

Use the links below to sign up for more information from the Council, or to remove yourself from this list.