



## E-Newsletter, March 2008

### Council of Canadians set to make a splash on World Water Day – March 22, 2008

Council activists will be making a splash this week bringing attention to the importance of water as a public good, not a source for profit.

The Council of Canadians is joining with CUPE, Oxfam Canada, the Polaris Institute, Eau Secours and other organizations to take part in a national day of action. More than 40 Council of Canadians' chapters are organizing events across the country to deliver the message: "Water for People, not for profit!"

Council activists will be meeting with their Members of Parliament to push for the creation of a **National Water Policy**. Film screenings and panel discussions have been organized, and activists will also be taking their messages to the media. If you are taking part in a World Water Day event, don't forget to bring your camera along and send us your pictures!

Visit our website at [www.canadians.org/WorldWaterDay](http://www.canadians.org/WorldWaterDay) to get a briefing note for MPs, lobbying tips, fact sheets, educational materials and to find out more about World Water Day events in your community.

#### TAKE ACTION NOW!

Should corporations be permitted to rake in huge profits by providing access to clean water, or should water be protected as a public resource, free to everyone who needs it?

Across Canada and around the world, people are taking action to mark World Water Day. Please add your voice. **Send a message** to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and your Member of Parliament demanding they support the right to water.

The United Nations is poised to vote on a motion declaring water and sanitation a human right. Outrageously, the motion has been opposed by both the Canadian and the U.S. governments. Canada and the U.S. are the only two countries to go on record opposing the right to water.

Take action now! Visit [www.RightToWater.ca](http://www.RightToWater.ca) or [www.nEauxDroits.ca](http://www.nEauxDroits.ca) to send a letter today.

Here's more about what's new at the Council of Canadians:

- **Council joins peace activists in urging MPs to end it, not extend it**
- **Event: Council of Canadians representatives tour the tar sands**
- **International movement against the SPP picks up strength**

- **Victory! PEI Premier agrees to hold public hearing on ethanol plant**
  - **Public health care: Canada's "Best Kept Secret"**
  - **Join the Council of Canadians today!**
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## **Council joins peace activists in urging MPs to end it, not extend it**

Late last week, the Council of Canadians joined the Canadian Peace Alliance at a press conference urging Members of Parliament to vote against extending the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan.

At the press conference, Brent Patterson, Director of Campaigns and Organizing for the Council of Canadians, highlighted Canadians' opposition to the war and to extending our country's military involvement there. The Council of Canadians is calling for the immediate, safe and orderly withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan, for Canada to return to fulfilling its traditional international role of peacekeeper.

Unfortunately, later that day the Conservatives joined forces with the Liberals to pass a motion to keep Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan for two more years. The motion passed by a vote of 197 to 77.

We will continue to keep up the pressure on Members of Parliament to withdraw from this unjust war.

For more information and additional resources visit the 'Don't extend it. End it.' campaign website at [endit.ca](http://endit.ca).

To read more about the Council's work on this issue visit [www.canadians.org/peace](http://www.canadians.org/peace).

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## **Event: Council of Canadians representatives tour the tar sands**

A group of activists from British Columbia concerned with Gordon Campbell's proposal for an energy corridor carrying tar sands oil to West Coast ports recently completed a "learning tour" of the Alberta tar sands. Representatives from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace, Check Your Head, the Institute for Citizen Journalism and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee learned about the environmental impacts of tar sand expansion by hearing the firsthand experiences of communities living around the tar sands.

The tar sands are proving very costly to the environment and communities. To make matters worse, a plan for a "fivefold expansion" of the tar sands under the Security and Prosperity Partnership is contributing to a rapid and uncontrolled expansion in the area, producing impacts in many provinces.

That's why the Council of Canadians has signed on with national and international environmental, social justice, labour, faith, landowner, academic and First Nations groups calling on the Alberta government to issue "no new approvals" in the tar sands. Only a halt on new approvals will provide the time needed to properly study serious tar sands problems and develop a plan that adequately addresses the social, economic, cultural and environmental concerns.

Visit [www.thepetitionsite.com/1/no-new-approvals-on-tar-sands-developments](http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/no-new-approvals-on-tar-sands-developments) to sign the "No new approvals" petition.

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## **International movement against the SPP picks up strength**

Early in March, the Council of Canadians joined civil society and fair trade groups, and progressive legislators from Canada, the U.S. and Mexico in Washington, D.C. to talk about NAFTA's real impacts on agriculture, labour, development and migration in all three countries.

The two-day conference explored NAFTA's evolution through the Security and Prosperity Partnership, and provided an opportunity for grassroots organizations to meet and plan for the next SPP leaders summit, taking place in New Orleans April 21-22, 2008. To find out more about the conference, visit [www.canadians.org/integratethis/corporate/2008/Mar-7.html](http://www.canadians.org/integratethis/corporate/2008/Mar-7.html).

Although planning is still in the early stages, there will likely be a teach-in or counter-conference to coincide with the fourth annual SPP summit, which is expected to be off-limits to all but the corporate executives of the North American Competitiveness Council. In preparation for this event, the Council of Canadians is working closely with groups such as Common Frontiers, the U.S. Alliance for Responsible Trade, Global Exchange, the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade and the New Orleans Grass Roots Round Table.

Meanwhile, a group of Canadian, U.S. and Mexican activists is on the second leg of a U.S. tour to discuss the damaging effects of NAFTA and the dangers of the SPP. Carleen Pickard, the Council of Canadians' B.C. and Yukon regional organizer, joined Manuel Perez Rocha, an associate fellow at the **Institute for Policy Studies**, and Hector Sanchez of **Global Exchange**, on a four-stop tour of the northeastern United States to raise awareness about the implications of the SPP for all three countries. " To read more about the SPP tour, visit [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org).

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## Victory! PEI Premier agrees to hold public hearing on ethanol plant

The Council of Canadians' Charlottetown chapter has been successful in their push for more public consultation regarding a proposed ethanol plant on Prince Edward Island.

As reported in *The Charlottetown Guardian* earlier this month, "After a meeting with the Council of Canadians on Thursday, Premier Robert Ghiz said he will be putting the matter to public consultation before any decisions are made on the issue of biofuel production on PEI... Leo Broderick of the Council of Canadians, which has been holding public meetings against the concept of a new ethanol plant, was happy to hear the province taking a cautionary tone."

Premier Ghiz went on to say that the government will be looking at a report on biofuels and renewable energy before any decision is made on the proposed ethanol plant.

For more information on the Council of Canadians' energy campaign, visit [www.canadians.org/energy](http://www.canadians.org/energy).

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## Public health care: Canada's "Best Kept Secret"

There's something about Canada's health care system that business leaders aren't telling you. In fact, it's Canada's best kept secret.

Canadian businesses clearly have a major advantage, because most of their employees' medical costs are covered by our universal public health care system. Even though many pay for extended coverage for services like dental care and pharmaceuticals, the costs aren't anywhere close to what U.S. companies must absorb.

The Council of Canadians has launched a new campaign to spread the message that public health care offers Canadian businesses and citizens a true competitive advantage. **Best Kept Secret: Canada's Health Care Competitive Advantage** will reach out to small and medium-sized businesses, community groups and other local organizations to encourage them to fight to protect and enhance public health care in Canada.

A comprehensive resource guide providing analysis and facts about the benefits of Canada's publicly-funded and publicly-delivered health care system is now available. You can find it and other materials at [www.ProfitIsNotTheCure.ca](http://www.ProfitIsNotTheCure.ca), or in the health care section of our website at [www.canadians.org/healthcare](http://www.canadians.org/healthcare).

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## **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, to forward a copy to a friend or to remove yourself from this list.