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E-Newsletter, May 2008



Canadians say no to SPP

“Disaster” summit produces more secrecy

The media and business consensus following the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) summit in New Orleans is that the trilateral meeting didn't produce anything significant. While this is partly correct – no new initiatives were announced – the ones we're stuck with are still bad enough. And as usual with the SPP, very few of the details about ongoing work ended up in the news.

For his part, Prime Minister Harper used the summit to “defend” Canada's bargaining power with the United States, imploring the importance of NAFTA and pointing to the U.S.'s need for our energy resources. “Canada really is confident that the next President will also understand the importance of NAFTA, and the importance of the commercial relationship between the United States and Canada,” said Harper.

He then emphasized what he understands to be “energy security,” meaning North American energy security. “**Canada is the biggest** and most stable supplier of energy to the United States in the world,” he said. “That energy security is more important now than it was 20 years ago when NAFTA was negotiated, and will be even more important in the future.”

The SPP once again was shown to be a venue for the business elite to lock in and expand their tight grip over North America's wealth, which continues to skyrocket at the expense of third-world poverty abroad and income stagnation at home. That wealth is also gained at the expense of the environment (through increased greenhouse gas emissions) and public health concerns (through dirty air, water and increased toxins).

The failure of the NAFTA/SPP model was the main topic at a People's Summit that took place April 21-22, 2008 in New Orleans to coincide with the official SPP summit. National Chairperson Maude Barlow and other Council of Canadians' representatives joined dozens of U.S., Mexican and Canadian civil society groups in New Orleans to participate in the locally organized event, which made the links between NAFTA's corporate profiteering and the devastation to communities on the ground.

In Canada, we now have proof, in the form of a public opinion poll commissioned by the Council of Canadians that this country overwhelmingly opposes the policy directions of the SPP and demands the agreement be fully debated in Parliament. Click [here](#) to read more about how Canadians feel about deeper integration through the SPP.

Public opposition has obviously weakened the SPP. Now it's time to put it out of its misery completely.

(Extracted from “Nothing new from the Disaster Summit but dangerous SPP initiatives live on” post on Integrate This!)

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

- **Water film FLOW debuts in Toronto**
- **Win! Council activists join nationwide protest against health care privatization**
- **Win! Water protectors help put a plug in Nestle water grab**
- **Take Action! Help stop TILMA in its tracks**



Click [here](#) to read more about how Canadians feel about deeper integration through the SPP

Water film FLOW debuts in Toronto

The Council of Canadians joined cinema enthusiasts and concerned citizens in late April for the Canadian film documentary debut of *FLOW: For Love Of Water*, featuring Maude Barlow and other water activists.

The film played to a full house at the Bloor Cinema in Toronto as part of the 'Hot Docs' Canadian International Documentary Film Festival.

Hot Docs is North America's largest documentary film festival. More than 2,000 films from around the world were submitted to Hot Docs this year, and 174 documentaries were chosen from 36 countries. About 40 of those documentaries are from Canadian filmmakers.

After the screening, Maude, filmmaker Irena Salina, and water conservationist Shri Rajendra Singh participated as panelists, discussing the seriousness of water issues around the world and the need for people to do their part to ensure the availability of clean accessible water for generations to come.

To read more about the film, please go to <http://flowthefilm.com/>.

For information about the Council of Canadians International Water Campaign, visit www.blueplanetproject.net

Council activists join nationwide protest against health care privatization

At the beginning of May, Council of Canadians activists joined with people across the country to express their concern with the creeping privatization of our national medicare program and the federal government's unwillingness to do anything to stop it.

With private clinics spreading across the country like bad weeds and more provincial governments willing to pay private clinics to deliver health care services, Canada is seeing a steady and incremental move towards American-style health care delivery where private health care providers are able to bring market-based ideals to patient treatment.

On May 3, more than 50,000 health care workers, union members, public health care supporters and concerned citizens joined for a massive demonstration against the Quebec government for its plans to rely on private health care to deliver services to Quebec patients. With the recently released Castonguay report, which calls for doctors to be allowed to work in both public and private health systems, an increased use of private clinics to reduce wait times, and the Quebec government's recent support of contract signings with the private Rockland MD surgical clinic to perform surgeries paid for with public dollars, the Quebec government is making the boldest moves to establishing private health care in our country.



Protests, rallies and other events took place across the country in support of the Quebec rally. Council of Canadians' activists participated in communities across Canada. In Nova Scotia, we organized a protest outside Scotia Surgery Inc., a private clinic recently given \$1 million by the Nova Scotia government to perform 500 orthopedic surgeries. Angela Giles, Council of Canadians' Atlantic Regional Organizer, pointed out in media coverage of the protest that public money should never go towards private clinic profits. Instead, provincial governments should be looking to existing examples across Canada of how public system resources can be better and more efficiently used to reduce wait times. Council of Canadians' vice-chair Leo Broderick told protestors that Canada's health care system is under threat and the provincial and federal governments should do more to defend it. "We are calling on Nova Scotians and all Canadians to begin a major fight... to reclaim Canada's medicare system," he said at the protest.

Council of Canadians Chairperson Maude Barlow added her voice to the issue in an op-ed published in the Halifax-Chronicle Herald. She calls on the federal government to act quickly to protect Canada's national medicare program in the interest of all Canadians. Click here to read it.

For more information about the Council of Canadians' campaign in support of public health care visit www.profitisnotthecure.ca

Win! Water protectors help put a plug in Nestle water grab

Council of Canadians members and activists helped put a limit on the amount of water bottling giant Nestle can take from their local water source.

Nestle Canada Inc. had submitted an application to take 3.6 million litres of water a day for five years from a well near Guelph, Ontario. While Ontario's Environment Ministry did allow the water-taking permit, the term was reduced from five years to two. According to news reports, the ministry said it considered 3.6 million litres a 'sustainable' amount for Nestle to take daily.

Council of Canadians chapter activists joined with other environmental and water protection groups, questioning the logic of letting an international conglomerate take 1.3 billion litres of water a year on the basis of a \$3,000 application fee. Nestle would also be required to pay close to \$3.7 million in conservation fees, but this is still not enough when contrasted with the serious and significant damage this huge water-taking causes to local water resources. The province ordered increased monitoring and testing to ensure that the public water supply isn't threatened by Nestle's business, and according to news reports, "the company will be on hook for the cost."

Ontario's environment commissioner Gord Miller commented critically, "It is illegal to export a tanker truck of water and sell it, say, in the U.S., but if you put that same amount of water in 20-litre containers and put it in a tractor trailer it's completely legal to export that as bottled water."

To read more about the Council of Canadians' National Water Campaign click [here](#).

Take action! Help stop TILMA in its tracks

With British Columbia and Alberta and now Quebec and Ontario moving closer to making Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreements (TILMA) a reality, public pressure is needed now more than ever to expose the undemocratic nature of these deals.

Late last month Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach introduced Bill 1, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act.

The bill paves the way for the full implementation of TILMA in Alberta, even though the controversial inter-provincial trade agreement was signed between British Columbia and Alberta without any public consultation or legislative debate in April, 2006.

TILMA allows corporations and powerful individuals to challenge any provincial or municipal government measure they feel 'restricts or impairs' their investment (i.e. their profits). Even measures designed to protect public health and the environment can be brought to an unelected NAFTA-like dispute panel with the authority to impose penalties as high as \$5 million on the offending province and/or municipality.

Similarly in Ontario, a trade coalition has recommended that Ottawa take the lead in "improving" trade across Canada by legislating a set of open trade principles and establishing a standing internal trade tribunal to ensure that all parties adhere to these new rules. Big business groups in Ontario and Quebec are rallying behind the supposed success of the B.C.-Alberta pact and calling for other provinces to strike similar deals.

Take action!

Contact your provincial representative today and express your concern about our government leaders' plans to further TILMA without the appropriate public consultation or legislative debate it requires.

The Council of Canadians will continue to work with organizations such as CUPE and the Parkland Institute to expose TILMA for undermining the authority of provinces and municipalities to uniquely protect the public interest on issues of health care, education, the environment, and the economy.

To read Council of Canadians' fact sheets, backgrounders and more on the TILMA issue, please go to <http://www.canadians.org/DI/issues/TILMA/index.html>.

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.