

YOUR VISION YOUR VOTE

THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS



E-newsletter, September 2008



Your vision, your vote – Federal Election 2008

After two years of a minority Conservative government, we are poised to return to the polls.

On October 14, 2008, we will be voting for a leader, vision and political party to lead our country and represent us in the House of Commons. Canada is at a crossroads. Never has the political landscape been so polarized.

Who do you want to decide the future of Canada's social programs, environmental protections and health regulations? And what about the direction of Canada's foreign policy and its military presence in Afghanistan? Or our country's immigration and security policies? Or whether private companies should be allowed to deliver health care for a price?

The federal election is an excellent opportunity to get parties to commit on record about what they would do for you on Parliament Hill.

The Council of Canadians has been front and centre drawing attention to the issues this campaign. We have an exciting, new section on our website dedicated specifically to election developments. On it, you will find information and analysis relating to our core campaigns around deeper integration with the United States, fair trade, public health care, clean water and peace. You can see pictures of our chapter activists in action across the country, and access resource tools like how to organize all-candidates debates, frequently asked election questions, and suggestions of hard-hitting questions to put to candidates on the campaign trail.



2008 Voter's Guide

Download a copy of our **2008 Voter's Guide**, which is now available in a printable electronic format. In it, you will find our election demands and analysis of political promises and positions of parties that earned more than two per cent of the popular vote in the last election.

Council of Canadians staff and board members have also been participating in a hard-hitting election blog on rabble.ca. This federal election is going to be determined to a large extent by the decisions that progressive-leaning Canadians make in this campaign, yet as you know, progressive voices and analysis are generally either marginalized or excluded in mainstream media coverage. This election blog features some of Canada's best commentators to help voters make informed decisions. We have added our voices to Murray Dobbin, Jim Stanford, Seth Klein, Pam Kappor, Alice Klein, Matthew Good and many others to provide daily election analysis. Visit www.rabble.ca/election



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

- **New poll shows majority of Canadians want NAFTA renegotiated; Council also calls for release of controversial trade text**
- **"Boom for whom?" Council's 23rd Annual General Meeting busts the myths of continental integration**
- **Chapters in action fighting health care privatization**
- **Help us "Unbottle it!"**
- **Join the Council of Canadians today!**

New poll shows majority of Canadians want NAFTA renegotiated; Council also calls for release of controversial trade text

A new Environics poll commissioned by the Council of Canadians shows that 61% of Canadians agree with U.S. presidential candidate Barack Obama that NAFTA should be renegotiated to include enforceable labour and environmental standards. The finding follows those of earlier polls and demonstrates a steady growth in Canadians' support for renegotiating NAFTA – from 45% in March to 52% in July (Angus Reid).

"Whichever parties win the U.S. and Canadian elections, the concerns of Canadians over the impact of NAFTA on jobs and the environment aren't going away," said John Urquhart, Executive Director of the Council of Canadians in a recent media release. "Canadians need to think very carefully before October 14 about who will best represent their concerns on the environment and jobs should Barack Obama become U.S. president and new NAFTA talks begin in 2009," he added. "And, even more urgently, Canadians need to think about who should represent our interests in talks with the European Union that are scheduled to begin a

mere three days after the election, on October 17.”

It has recently come to light that the Harper government has been in negotiations for a new “deep economic integration” trade deal with the European Union that, according to media reports, will rival NAFTA in scope. The Harper government has refused to release the text of the agreement until after the October 14 federal election.

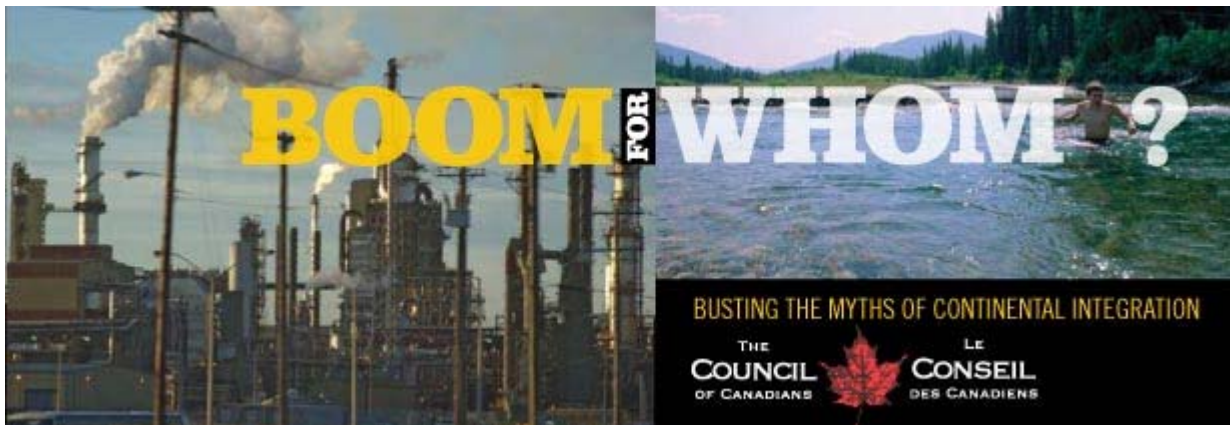
“The Prime Minister should be accountable to the public and release the text immediately so that voters can make an informed decision on a deal that will be further negotiated in Montreal just three days after the federal election,” said Maude Barlow, national chairperson of the Council of Canadians.

Go [here](#) to read more about our new poll on NAFTA renegotiation.

Take Action!

Send your letter to Stephen Harper today demanding that the full text of the proposed European Union trade agreement and the detailed study of it be released immediately. Go [here](#) to make your voice heard.

“Boom for whom?” Council’s 23rd Annual General Meeting busts the myths of continental integration



The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America includes plans for a five-fold expansion of the Alberta tar sands. Working groups, comprised of government and industry leaders from Canada, the United States and Mexico, see the expansion of the tar sands as a key factor in moving towards an integrated energy market in North America.

But who *really* benefits from energy integration and the rapid growth of tar sands development in Alberta? Is it Canadians? Or is it the oil and gas conglomerates that are driving the agenda to supply the limitless demands of the U.S. market?

The Council of Canadians’ 23rd annual general meeting, which will take place in Edmonton, Alberta October 31 – November 2, will bring together Albertans, experts, allies, activists and our members from across Canada to try to answer these questions by looking at the diverse and far-reaching effects of tar sands development on our water, health, and public services. We will build alliances with social justice and environmental groups to demand a Canadian energy strategy that plans for the future and will give Canadians security of energy supplies, as well as strong policies that protect our environment and focus on finding alternative, less harmful energy solutions.

Register today!

Join Council members from across Canada to participate in workshops, learn more about the issues, and share strategies. Don’t miss this opportunity to help us plan for the year ahead. Go [here](#) to register today.

Chapters in action fighting health care privatization

Council of Canadians’ chapter activists are helping to fight health care privatization.

Members of our Montreal chapter were at the Sheraton Centre in Montreal this August to make sure that delegates to the annual Canadian Medical Association (CMA) meeting were aware that Canadians support publicly-funded and publicly-delivered health care. Holding signs “Protect Medicare – Don’t privatize it!” chapter members countered the pro-privatization messages of past CMA President Dr. Brian Day and new CMA President and private clinic owner Dr. Robert Ouellet.

We worked in partnership with the Quebec-based Coalition Solidarité Santé highlighting the growing trend of health care privatization, particularly in Quebec. “Quebec continues to be ground zero for health care privatization,” said Maude Barlow in a media release prior to the CMA meeting. “With a proliferation of private clinics, and particularly diagnostic clinics, a provincial government that favours health care privatization, and the refusal of the Quebec government to provide any kind of report to the federal government under the Canada Health Act, public health care faces serious threats in this province.” Go [here](#) to read a full copy of the release.

Chapter activists also fought against health care privatization in Alberta this week. Joining with Friends of Medicare supporters, members of the Council’s Calgary chapter protested the opening of the second Copeman Healthcare Centre, a private, for-profit clinic modeled after a similar clinic in Vancouver that offers access to family doctors for a price. Patients pay an entrance fee of \$3,900 dollars up front and an annual fee of \$2,900 dollars to see doctors, nurses and physical therapists.



Mel Tegtmeyer, chair of the Council’s Calgary chapter, was at the protest and pointed out to clinic owner Donald Copeman that the clinic was taking doctors from the public system. With more than 5 million Canadians presently without a family doctor, there are mounting concerns about people’s ability to access health care services. One woman at the event confirmed that her family doctor had left a public practice to work at the private Copeman clinic. “It doesn’t help the system in general when you have doctors leaving the public health care system to go to a private clinic,” she said in media coverage of the event. Go [here](#) to read a copy of our media release on this issue.

Help us “Unbottle it!”

Working in communities and cities across the country, Council members and activists are building a successful campaign to ban bottled water. Canada has one of the best drinking water systems in the world, but the bottled water industry has worked hard to undermine our faith in public water. The industry sells water – what should be a shared public resource – for huge profits. Producing and transporting bottled water creates large amounts of fossil fuels, and plastic water bottles continue to end up by the millions in local landfills.

Get involved!

You can join this growing campaign by getting involved with securing a bottled water ban in your municipality. Go [here](#) to get resources to help you with your efforts, see a map of bottled water bans across the country, and media coverage from across Canada on this issue.

Join the Council of Canadians today!

The strength of the Council is in its membership. The Council does not accept funding from corporations or from governments, so membership donations are vital to our activities. We work with community groups, seniors, students, unions and other organizations across the country to promote progressive policies on public health care, fair trade, clean water and other issues of social and economic concern to Canadians. **Join the Council today**, and help us prove that a better Canada is possible.