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## E-Newsletter, April 2009

The Council of Canadians is leading the fight to protect and preserve water as a public trust both in Canada and around the world. We empower people to take action, uniting them in the call for a National Water Policy, securing the human right to water at the United Nations, calling attention to the issues with bottled water for both the environment and local watersheds, and promoting access to clean, safe drinking water for all Canadians.

There have been huge strides made for water justice over the past month. Here are some highlights:

### **Maude Barlow addresses the United Nations General Assembly**

On April 22, Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow made her first address to the United Nations General Assembly to support the Bolivian call for an annual "International Mother Earth Day" celebration. Following her address, she met with representatives from 30 UN member countries, providing a personal briefing about the world's water crisis and the importance of a UN right to water covenant.

"The water crisis is perhaps the most urgent ecological and human threat of our time and the first – and the most devastating – face of climate change," she told delegates in her address. "We need to assert once and for all that access to clean, affordable water is a fundamental human right that must be codified in nation-state law and as a full covenant at the United Nations."

To read Maude's full speech or to view a webcast of the event [go here](#).

### **We painted the town blue on World Water Day!**

Council of Canadians' chapters and supporters put the spotlight on water with more than 50 events in towns and cities across the country to mark World Water Day this year. Our chapter activists screened documentaries, signed petitions, toasted tap water, and held public rallies to show their support for water as a shared public resource and a human right. We illuminated the Peace Tower in a brilliant shade of blue to highlight our call for a National Water Policy and had hundreds of people sign our **Tap Water Pledge** in support of publicly-owned and delivered water.

### **We fought for water justice at the World Water Forum**

The Council of Canadians' Blue Planet Project joined forces with activists across Canada and internationally to fight water privatization and stand up for water justice. In March, we took this fight to Istanbul, Turkey for the Fifth World Water Forum where we were instrumental as part of a movement that saw more than 20 countries challenge a ministerial declaration released at the forum that defines water as a "need" rather than a "right."

## Support our work – Donate now

The Council of Canadians is a non-profit organization and **does not accept money from corporations or governments**. Our work is sustained by the generous donations of concerned Canadians who share our vision and commitment to action. **Click [here](#)** to find out how you can join tens of thousands of like-minded people who believe that a better Canada – and a better world – is possible.

**Click the "Forward" link at the bottom of the email** to forward this e-newsletter to a friend.

### **Sign up!**

Want to stay up to date on Council of Canadians' news, activities and hard-hitting analysis? **Click [here](#) to enter your e-mail address.**



*Brian Skerrett and Norah Chalinor of the Council's Guelph chapter toast World Water Day.*

The World Water Forum's agenda is dominated by the world's biggest private water companies, including Suez, Vivendi and RWE Thames. The Blue Planet Project has joined other concerned groups in pointing out that the water companies care more about profiting from a global water crisis than working toward sustainable public solutions that ensure access to clean, safe water for everyone.

Anil Naidoo, Blue Planet Project Organizer, said the successful outcome of having so many countries band together in favour of declaring a human right to water through a United Nations process was inspiring. "We were committed to bringing together hundreds of global activists in Istanbul and finding ways that those voices could be expressed," he said. "We could not have believed we would get this kind of support, and it is not over."

### **We are helping communities "Unbottle it!"**

The Council of Canadians has teamed up with CUPE Ontario to visit communities across Ontario, encouraging them to tap into public water and "Unbottle It!" Building on the growing momentum to ban the sale of bottled water in municipalities and institutions like school boards and university campuses, the Council's "Unbottle It!" campaign takes aim at the problems associated with bottled water, including the drain on water resources, greenhouse gas emissions generated by transporting bottles, and environmental concerns with the millions of empty plastic water bottles that fill landfills.

Between January and April, the "Unbottle It!" message was delivered in 19 Ontario communities. Ontario now has the highest number of bottled water bans of all provinces.

To find out more about how your community can "Unbottle it!" [go here](#).

### **Win! Vancouver bans bottled water**

Vancouver recently joined the growing list of cities and school boards that have banned the sale of bottled water. There are now 39 Canadian municipalities that have bottled water bans.

Last week, Vancouver city council voted to phase out sales of bottled water at city-owned facilities, and to increase the number of drinking fountains. The city's plan calls for the immediate elimination of single-serving bottled water at council meetings as a symbolic first step.

Thank you to all of our Vancouver members who did their part to secure this ban by phoning their city councillor. You helped make a difference!

### **Atlantic communities find out how to paint the town blue!**

Council of Canadians' chapters will be hosting events April 29 to May 7 as part of a six-city Atlantic speaking tour on water issues. Presenters will from both the Council of Canadians and CUPE will tell people how they can turn their community "blue" by asking their municipal government to resist water privatization, promote water as human right at the local level, and ban the sale of bottled water in public spaces.

Tour stops will be in Halifax, Wolfville and Mahone Bay, NS, Charlottetown, PEI, Saint John, NB and St. John's, NL. For a full listing of event details [go here](#). To find out more about the Council's Blue Communities Project [go here](#).

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

- **A Message from Maude: "Thank you for renewing your 2009 membership."**
- **State of Play: New report reveals undemocratic trade plan for Canada**
- **Take Action! Tell your MP to vote "no" for the Canada-Columbia Free Trade Agreement**
- **Join the Council of Canadians today**

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## **A Message from Maude: "Thank you for renewing your 2009 membership."**

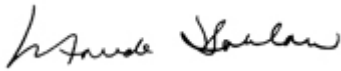
I wanted to extend a warm and heartfelt thank you to everyone who has renewed their 2009 membership with the Council of Canadians. Your continued commitment and dedication to the issues that all Canadians hold dear means that we are able to make real changes in communities across our country.

It is now more important than ever to have a national advocacy organization that stands up for social programs, such as health care; that fights to protect our natural resources such as water from export and exploitation; that ensures energy policies are sustainable, green and just; and pushes for fair trade that puts people and the environment before profits.

There is a lot of work ahead of us. But your continued financial support and amazing commitment to the Council of Canadians means so much. Please accept my most heartfelt thanks. If you missed your 2009 membership renewal, please renew today by



visiting our [website](#) or calling us toll free at 1-800-387-7177.



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## State of Play: New report reveals undemocratic trade plan for Canada

At the end of March, the Council of Canadians' released a new report revealing that new interprovincial trade agreements threaten municipal safeguards to protect the environment, public services and communities.

Written by trade legal expert Steven Shrybman, the report, titled *State of Play: Canada's Internal Free Trade Agenda*, provides analysis of the recently enacted Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) between B.C. and Alberta, as well as the state of various trade agreements between Ontario and Quebec (OQEPA), Nova Scotia, New Brunswick (PARE) and Saskatchewan (an Economic Partnership with BC and Alberta).

The report states that agreements like TILMA serve to dismantle local control of municipalities and force labour, environmental and social policy standards to harmonize to the lowest level. It highlights the role the federal government has played in encouraging the implementation of new agreements and notes that the government has even threatened to use its constitutional powers to force their implementation. The report also investigates the connection between TILMA and other trade deals under consideration, both interprovincially and with the European Union.

"The true purpose of this domestic 'trade' agenda is to impose broad constraints on the exercise of governmental and public authority under the rubric of addressing trade barriers," said Steven Shrybman.

To read a copy of the full report [go here](#).

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## Take Action! Tell your MP to vote "no" for the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement

This week, the Council of Canadians is taking part in a week of action against the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. Our focus will be on convincing Liberal MPs that this is a bad agreement that can only worsen human rights violations, increase violence against labour and civil society activists, and weaken environmental protections in Colombia for the sake of boosting the profits of large Canadian mining and resource companies.

Foreign Affairs Minister Stockwell Day introduced Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, as well as two other side agreements on the environment and labour, on March 26, 2009 for first reading. It will come back to the House of Commons in early to mid-May. So far the NDP and Bloc Québécois have said they do not support the deal, while several Liberals have publicly endorsed it.

**Take action today! [Go here](#)** to find out more about what you can do to stop this trade agreement, and tell MPs they must defend human rights before trade.

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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. By becoming a member of the Council of Canadians your generous support helps give our organization a voice on social, economic and political issues and build a strong, independent and diverse Canada. **Join the Council today**, and help us prove that a better Canada is possible. Already a member? Share this newsletter with a friend and encourage them to join or donate and become a part of Canada's largest citizens' advocacy organization.

## Want all the trade news? Stay informed with our new trade blog.

For regular updates about current news and analysis on emerging trade issues, visit our new Trade Blog at [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org) Click [here](#) to see the latest updates.



*The Trade Blog is written by Stuart Trew, the Council of Canadians' Trade Campaigner.*