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E-Newsletter, March 2009

Painting Parliament Blue in Support of Public Water

On March 12, the Council of Canadians joined with a coalition of national and local water advocacy groups illuminating the Peace Tower with a spectacular projection of blue light, and offered a toast to public water to highlight the need for federal action to support Canada's public water resources and services. The Parliament Hill event kicked off a series of "Paint the town blue" actions taking place across the country to celebrate World Water Day on March 22, 2009.

This year Council of Canadians' chapters and allies are marking World Water Day with activities that promote water as a public resource and as a human right. We are celebrating a decade of community action against water privatization through the Water Watch Coalition, which was launched in 1999 by the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA).



We have launched a new initiative called "The Blue Communities Project" providing community leaders and activists with tools to resist public-private partnerships, promote water as a human right at the local level, and ban the purchase and sale of bottled water in public spaces. Click [here](#) to find out more about how you can get involved in World Water Day activities, and to access our new Blue Communities Project Guide, fact sheets and other resources.

Take Action! Want to show your support for **publicly-owned and delivered water**? Click [here](#) to take our Tap Water Pledge.

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

- **Win! Federation of Canadian Municipalities says no to bottled water as communities across Canada ditch the bottle**
- **Fighting Water Privatization at the World Water Forum**
- **The Tar Sands and the Dark Side of the Boom**
- **Stayed Informed With the New Council of Canadians' Campaign Blog**
- **Join the Council of Canadians today!**

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.

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Win! Federation of Canadian Municipalities says no to bottled water as communities across Canada ditch the bottle

At a meeting in Victoria, B.C. earlier this month the Federation of Canadian Municipalities voted in favour of a resolution that urges cities to phase out the purchase and sale of bottled water in civic buildings and at city events.

The FCM decision came after intense lobbying by the Council of Canadians encouraging municipal representatives to support the resolution. Municipal representatives spoke positively about the policy saying it would be a good opportunity to promote public drinking water and push for more funding for much-needed water infrastructure repairs and improvements.

"The FCM adopting a policy opposing bottled water would also be an important step toward a national water policy that would improve the public system and ensure clean drinking water standards for all communities across the country," said Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, in a media release prior to the FCM vote.

The London chapter of the Council of Canadians was instrumental in securing the vote, working with the city of London to have this resolution tabled at the FCM. Council of Canadians chapter activists and allies have also been presenting bottled water resolutions to municipalities across Canada. So far, 27 municipalities have phased out the sale of bottled water in their facilities.

Click [here](#) to read the full release. For more information about the Council of Canadians' "Unbottle it!" campaign click [here](#).

Fighting Water Privatization at the World Water Forum

The Council of Canadians is fighting alongside other international water justice activists for the human right to water at the 5th triannual World Water Forum taking place in Istanbul, Turkey.

The World Water Forum (WWF), organized by the World Water Council, runs from March 16-22. The forum brings together corporate bigwigs from multinational water corporations and financial institutions to plan ways to influence water policy. The emphasis is on privatization and turning water into a commodity that can be bought and sold. The corporate voices are countered by a grassroots movement that includes the Council of Canadians' Blue Planet Project and many other allied groups from around the world who believe water is part of a commons that should be available to everyone without price.

Tensions have already been high, as peaceful activists were confronted by Turkish police on the opening day of the forum. Reports indicate that Turkish police used tear gas and water cannons, fired rubber bullets, and arrested seventeen people, many of whom required medical attention.

Meera Karunanathan, the Council of Canadians national water campaigner, is blogging from Istanbul to report on events. In one of her posts she quotes Maude Barlow, the Council's National Chairperson, as she spoke to reporters following the police violence. "I have been at every World Water Forum meeting and we have protested at every single one because the WWF pretends to be a UN conference, but it is not," said Maude. "We call the World Water Council the lords of water. Although unelected they have taken for themselves the role of speaking for the whole world. They are pushing one development model through, which is that all water is privatized and the market determines allocation. Unfortunately for them there is a powerful group of international activists who have come to speak for the people of the world. We speak for the majority when we ask for water to be considered a human right and public trust. We stand in solidarity with Turkish activists who oppose the WWF and we stand in solidarity with the people who protested peacefully for something we all believe in."

To read more blog posts about the World Water Forum go [here](#).

The Tar Sands and the Dark Side of the Boom

On February 4, as part of the Council of Canadians' National Day of Action to Demand a Canadian Energy Strategy, Members of Parliament received a copy of the Council's new video documentary *Dark Side of the Boom: Canada's Mordor*.

Our message to MPs was simple – there must be no exemption for the tar sands in any proposed binational action addressing climate change. The Harper government continues to promote Alberta's tar sands as a secure energy source while ignoring the clear realities of carbon emissions. Like oil and water, real action addressing climate change and current and increased production in the tar sands simply don't mix.

The tar sands are a key example of the environmental and social consequences of flawed free trade agreements, with free market rules and big oil directing development rather than sound public policy. The Council of Canadians continues its call for a Canadian energy strategy that ensures energy security for Canadians and helps transition to sustainable energy production and consumption.

For more information about our 2009 Energy Day of Action go [here](#).



To watch *Dark Side of the Boom: Canada's Mordor* go [here](#).

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.

Stayed Informed With the New Council of Canadians' Campaign Blog

For regular updates about current news, analysis, actions and events, visit our new Campaign Blog at www.canadians.org. Click [here](#) to see today's news.



The Campaign Blog is written by Brent Patterson, Director of Campaigns and Communications at the Council of Canadians.