



E-newsletter, September 2007



Taking it back! Council promotes a peoples' vision of North America

At the Council of Canadians, we've been on a high since the end of August, when thousands of people filled the streets in Montebello, Ottawa and across the country, to protest against the SPP. It was the culmination of many years of hard work by activists in 70 Council chapters across Canada to expose the agenda behind deep integration, and stand up for the things that matter to people: public health care, clean water, energy security, and social and economic justice.

As we plunge into fall, Council chapters are gearing up for a full slate of political actions. We'll be keeping an eye on the SPP, producing hard-hitting research, and working to expose decisions made in secret by government and business officials. And the staff members in our national and regional offices are getting reading for our 22nd Annual General Meeting, which will take place in beautiful Kelowna, B.C. from October 26-28.

This year, we're looking at ways to take back what is ours – our democratic right to participate in discussions about Canada's future within North America. With guest speakers and activists from Mexico, Canada and the U.S., we will develop ways to mobilize against the SPP and promote a more sustainable and just vision for North America. The keynote speakers at this year's AGM will include:

- **Maude Barlow**, National Chairperson, the Council of Canadians
- **Wenonah Hauter**, Executive Director, Food and Water Watch, Washington, DC
- **Claudia Campero Arena**, Founding Member, COMDA (Mexican Committee for the Defense of Water Rights), Mexico City

There will also be a full day of workshops, panel discussions and political action. We hope you can join us in Kelowna to celebrate our victories and plan for the year ahead. Visit www.canadians.org/AGM to register for the AGM today.

Meanwhile, here's what's new at the Council of Canadians:

- [Challenging Dr. Profit in Vancouver](#)
 - [Making TILMA matter in Ontario](#)
 - [Water activists tell Nestle to take a hike](#)
 - [Action Alert: Take water off the table](#)
 - [Join the Council today!](#)
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Challenging Dr. Profit in Vancouver

The Council of Canadians was in Vancouver in August, to protest against incoming Canadian Medical Association President Dr. Brian Day's stance on health care privatization. We worked with patients, doctors and nurses to tell the CMA that profit has no place in Canada's health care system.

This year, the CMA met in Vancouver at the posh Westin Bayshore Hotel, home of the \$25 breakfast buffet. The decor was well suited to the practices of the new CMA president, Dr. Day, the owner of several private, for-profit health clinics in British Columbia.



Surprisingly, there was little mention of the CMA's controversial position paper, *Medicare plus: toward a sustainable publicly funded health care* at the meeting. Touted by the CMA's leaders as the way to "save" Canada's health care system, the paper argued that barriers to private insurance be removed, for doctors to be permitted to work in both the public and private systems, and for more health care services to be delivered on a for-profit basis.

Unfortunately, doctors at the CMA meeting weren't given the opportunity to discuss or debate the paper. Read the news release at www.canadians.org/media/healthcare/2007/22-Aug-07.html.

What they did talk about – briefly, and after the media left the room – was a controversial motion that called for the support of user fees and the creation of health savings accounts. The motion was narrowly defeated by 50 per cent to 48 per cent.

Council activists protested proudly outside Dr. Brian Day's private Cambie Surgery Centre in Vancouver while the CMA met behind closed doors. They sported brightly coloured signs with some of Dr. Day's most outrageous statements against public health care such as: "I do not support the principles of the Canada Health Act" and "If the best thing is to pay, jump the queue and break the law – it's not my role to uphold it." This made Dr. Day's opinion of Canadian health care abundantly clear. Visit www.profitisnotthecure.ca/CMA to see photos from the Vancouver protests.

The Council of Canadians will be on the ground next summer at the organization's annual meeting in Montreal, and we will continue to monitor Dr. Day and the CMA in the months ahead. Visit www.profitisnotthecure.ca/CMA to find out what you can do to tell the CMA and the Harper government that profit is not the cure.

Making TILMA matter in Ontario

The Ontario election campaign is into its second week and the major parties are beginning to talk seriously about their platforms for the province. But one of the issues that hasn't been highlighted much is the parties' positions on the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA), which went into effect between Alberta and British Columbia on April 1.

It may seem strange to suggest that Ontario politicians should be talking about a western trade deal. But Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty has said he admires the Alberta-B.C. free trade pact, which lets private companies legally challenge local and provincial government laws, regulations, policies and programs that they feel hurt profits.

Under TILMA, disputes over what constitutes a barrier to the free flow of trade and investment (i.e., profits) will be

decided by unelected NAFTA-style tribunals with the authority to impose fines as high as \$5 million. TILMA turns democracy on its head by making local rules accountable to business interests, not the other way around!

And yet McGuinty has signaled on several occasions that he would sign TILMA, pursue a similar agreement with Quebec, or push for the inclusion of TILMA's anti-democratic dispute resolution process in the existing Agreement on Internal Trade between Canada's provinces. Conservative leader John Tory doesn't just say he likes TILMA – he has promised to sign it if elected premier of Ontario. The NDP's Howard Hampton at this point has not made any public declaration on TILMA, while the Greens have expressed concern with the overarching principles of the agreement, as they do not incorporate environmental safeguards or promote fair trade.

Clearly this is an election issue and the political parties must be forced to answer for their positions.

For more information on TILMA and the fight to dismantle it, check out our recently updated backgrounder called "Another Bad Deal for Canada" at www.canadians.org/TILMA. In the next few days, we'll be posting Ontario-specific material that citizens can use to lobby political candidates. So be sure to keep visiting www.canadians.org.

Water activists tell Nestle to take a hike

The Council's Anil Naidoo recently returned from Stockholm, Sweden, where he worked with activists from around the world to protest the influence of private water companies over the city's annual World Water Week. For the last 17 years, the event has provided water researchers and policy-makers with a forum for dialogue and debate. But according to Naidoo, "World Water Week is losing legitimacy as an open space for debate and discussion as the corporate water takers have the forum in their sights."

This year, bottled water giant Nestle was the Forum's main sponsor. Naidoo and others participated in large-scale demonstrations telling Nestle and others to keep their hands off of the world's water. In his blog from Stockholm, Naidoo reflects on the global water movement's many victories at World Water Week, writing, "During the week we shook up the otherwise staid world of the global water mafia. We won over many conference members with well-reasoned arguments, materials and even some direct action."

Blog from Stockholm: <http://worldwaterweek.blogspot.com/2007/08/water-justice-message-delivered-at.html>.

For more information on the global fight for the right to water, visit the Blue Planet Project's website at www.blueplanetproject.net.

Action Alert: Take water off the table

A recent report from the Munk Centre for International Studies confirms what the Council of Canadians has been saying for years: Canada's water is under threat.

Visit www.powi.ca/pdfs/events/powi20070910_9am_On_the_Table.pdf to read the report.

The report's authors state, "While there are many well-publicized statements and written documents indicating that Canada's water is not for sale, experts believe these have little or no legal force...We need federal legislation preventing the bulk removal of water from Canada's drainage basins in the event that any province is either unable or unwilling to do so."

Federal environment minister John Baird claims that Canada does have a ban on water exports and that there is no

plan to sell Canada's water. This is simply untrue.

For years, the Chrétien government claimed that bulk water exports were banned, but just recently the Liberal Party introduced a new plan for Canada's water, acknowledging that a "federal ban on bulk water exports could be challenged under NAFTA or the WTO."

In April, water exports were on the table at the North American Futures 2025 meeting, which brought together business and government officials from Canada, the United States and Mexico, to inform priorities for the Security and Prosperity Partnership. Visit www.canadians.org/water to read more about the North American Futures 2025 meeting.

One of the organizers of that meeting, Armand Peschard-Sverdrup of the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, has said, "It's no secret the U.S. is going to need water. ... It's no secret that Canada is going to have an overabundance of water. At the end of the day there may have to be arrangements."

Visit www.canadians.org/action to send a letter to Prime Minister Harper, demanding:

- That water be clearly excluded from NAFTA.
- An explicit ban on bulk water exports and an end to any discussions about water within the scope of the SPP.
- A new National Water Policy that bans the export of water for profit, legislates strict restrictions on water diversions, and recognizes a strong federal role in the protection of this valuable resource.

Visit the Council of Canadians' website at www.canadians.org/water to find out what you can do to help protect Canada's water.

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** at www.canadians.org/join, and help us prove that a better Canada is possible.

Signing up / Signing off

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