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2 Canadian Perspectives  Spring 2013

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THANK YOU
The fight against election fraud and the courage of the eight Canadians’ determination to expose the chicanery of the Conservative Party deserves the support of all Canadians. I hope the eight Canadians are successful in their cases, but I fear the big money behind the opposition will succeed in watering down the serious issue that is involved.

The Council of Canadians is to be commended for giving these people – and all Canadians – support on such an important issue! It strongly suggests that a national amount should be set aside to help defray costs for ordinary citizens to do the right thing.

A concerned citizen
Calgary, AB

WE NEED TO CALL IT NEOLIBERALISM
Brent Patterson’s article “Making Waves and Sinking the Harper Agenda” in the autumn issue of Canadian Perspectives was exciting.

I have one suggestion: that we name and describe the ideology referred to that is behind Harper’s agenda. To do so would clarify why Harper is doing what he is doing.

The ideology is called neoliberalism (google it). It is named after the unregulated liberal economics of the days of the robber barons that led us eventually to the Great Depression. It is the false religious-like belief that if governments step aside and give the wealthy, corporations and financiers free reign, all will benefit.

Deregulation, privatization, corporate tax cuts, low taxes on the rich, free trade agreements, P3s, high unemployment, job outsourcing, austerity policies and financial speculation are just some of the ways this false economic religion is practised.

It has led to radical inequality and environmental devastation in Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

We can’t just battle the symptoms of neoliberalism – we must also name and fight the sick ideology itself.

Jim Riesberry
Brockville, ON

SAY NO TO TANKERS!
One of the stronger arguments against tanker traffic in coastal waters is that all three of the recent maritime disasters – Exxon Valdez, Queen of the North, and Costa Concordia – were due to human error. No amount of sophisticated aids to navigation can protect us against human frailty. I’m constantly surprised that this point is not made more often and more strongly by opponents of tankers.

Dr. R.M. Strang
Surrey, B.C.

BUILD AWARENESS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT
Awareness of environmental issues and changes to the environmental laws here in Canada has become a recent preoccupation for me. Issues surrounding the environment should be every Canadian’s primary concern, and we should be sharing notes and taking pictures of the urban and rural decay we are all experiencing in our neighbourhoods and communities. We should be educating each other from coast-to-coast-to-coast, posting it on Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter, and discussing what we see.

Paula Ann Stewart
Montréal, Québec

CIDA IS SHORT FOR “CORPORATE INVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT AGENCY”
The Harper government has dropped the first shoe of its new foreign policy – economic agreements with the Third World and China. The latter will be at our expense, but it looks as though our agreements with developing countries will be at theirs.

Canadian mining companies are implicated in dozens of cases of human rights and environmental abuses: Dorato Resources in Peru, Barrick Gold in Tanzania and New Guinea; Centerra in Kyrgyzstan; Excellon in Mexico; Hudbay Minerals in Guatemala, and others.

If the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement we signed with China is any measure, the agreements we are signing in Africa and South America will allow Canadian mining companies to run roughshod over other peoples’ rights and their environment.

Now the other shoe has dropped. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will be funding non-governmental organizations like World Vision to work with Canadian businesses who want to set up shop in other countries.

The idea is to use the connections that NGOs have in those countries to help Canadian corporations hit the ground running. The theory is that NGOs will also teach them to behave.

If that’s the theory, it’s not working. Some $50 million has gone into this effort since the Conservatives came to power. And now citizens of the nations in which our mining companies operate are looking to the courts for help. The Q’eqchi’, a Mayan people from Guatemala, have even filed suits in Ontario courts for shootings and rapes at HudBay’s former mining project in El Estor.

Forced displacement, rape, murder and environmental degradation loom heavily over the industry. NGOs might have the knowledge to make Canadian companies better corporate citizens, but not the clout. Instead, they are being used to polish the tarnish growing on our international reputation.

David McLaren
Neyaashiinigmiing, ON

SEND US YOUR LETTERS!
If you have something to say about an article you have read in Canadian Perspectives, or an issue you think would interest our readers, please write to us. We reserve the right to edit your letter for clarity and length. Letters must include your full name, address and phone number.

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The Council of Canadians
700-170 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V5
Email: inquiries@canadians.org
Attention: Editor, Canadian Perspectives
Dear friends,

What a winter we have had! Our “No Pipelines! No Tankers!” tour in B.C. last October was wonderful. It drew great crowds and lots of media. It ended with the opening night of our fabulous AGM in Nanaimo where a crowd of 900 people came out to hear guest speakers Snuneymuxw Chief Douglas White, Bill McKibon and Linda McQuaig. I am fully convinced the western export pipelines will never be built. The people of British Columbia are doing a stellar job as keepers of the land and water.

December was taken up in court to stand in support of the eight brave Canadians who are challenging the robocalls that tried to steer voters to false voting sites during the last federal election. The case showed that these were not just a random set of phone calls and that widespread fraud may have taken place. The week in court was one filled with tension and drama and closely watched by the Conservative Party, I am sure. I came out of the closing arguments so proud of the fact that we had supported this case and feeling that whatever the judge decides, it was right to stand behind these voters in their fight for democracy.

December took me on an incredible trip to Mexico where I had the honour of sitting as a member of a Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal on Dams and Evictions, and then visited two sites where Canadian mining companies are threatening local water sources. I was taken to a sacred site by the people of Wrikuta in North Central Mexico and felt blessed by the spirit of “place where the sun was born.”

The last days of 2012 welcomed the rise of Idle No More and the courageous stand by Indigenous women and youth against the loss of watershed protection contained in the two government omnibus budget bills. In solidarity with Idle No More, in January, we launched Common Causes, our “assembly of movements” to form a common front against the destructive changes the Harper government is making to social, environmental, labour, human rights and foreign policy. Local Common Causes groups are forming in communities across the country to share their work and to support one another in their struggles. This is a good antidote to the attempt by the Harper government to silence dissent in this country.

The last few months have been very busy for me personally, fighting water privatization in Regina, toxic dumping in a once pristine lake in Newfoundland, and a planned mega quarry in southern Ontario. Our fight against CETA has been relentless and we now have more than 40 municipalities that have expressed some concern or outright opposition to this corporate-friendly trade and investment deal.

In February, I had a very special trip to Vienna, Austria, to support a European-wide citizens’ initiative to hold a referendum against a European Commission directive that some countries have to sell off their water services in exchange for debt relief. The initiative has already garnered more than one million signatures and aims to collect at least another million. I was deeply impressed by their commitment, and promised to spread the word of their struggle around the world. Already water cut-offs and even evictions are happening in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Bulgaria.

Coming up in the spring is part two of our Great Lakes tour, which will visit cities in seven communities, including four in the United States. We are promoting water as a public trust and protected biosphere and decided it was important to choose an example of threats to Great Lakes waters in each community and see what we can do to help people take action. We are very excited that the notion of the Great Lakes as a public trust is taking root, and that Robert Kennedy’s Waterkeeper Alliance has endorsed our campaign and its model.

Preparations are already underway for a powerful civil society presence in Niagara-on-the-Lake in July, when provincial and territorial premiers will gather to discuss health care, among other issues. Prime Minister Stephen Harper is clearly planning to take the federal government out of the funding equation for health care in Canada, paving the way for privatized services. We will be there en masse to tell the premiers not to let this happen. The Council of Canadians has been fighting alongside front line health care workers and public health coalitions to defend our cherished health care system, and we will continue to do so with all our strength.

To all of you who make all of this possible, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.
Grassroots movements are springing up across the country at a record pace. But what exactly are grassroots movements? What’s behind their growth? And how can they flourish? We asked grassroots activists for their thoughts.

September 2011: One thousand people converge in downtown Manhattan after a call from the Canadian-based Adbusters Media Foundation, and the Occupy movement is born. Its slogan – “We are the 99%” – becomes shorthand for the injustice created by economic and social inequality. This rallying cry quickly spreads across the continent, attracting a new generation of activists to protests across Canada.

Lana Goldberg got involved with Occupy Toronto. For 40 days she lived in St. James Park, and continued to organize even after being evicted. “To me, grassroots activism is non-institutionalized organizing carried out by ordinary people, often by those most affected by unjust structures,” said Goldberg. “It tends to operate in solidarity with other struggles and with all oppressed people.”

By 2012, the Occupy camps were gone, but the awareness they created and the activists they energized are still having an impact. And now another grassroots movement was on the horizon. The Harper government’s omnibus budget bills, with their devastating changes to environmental regulations, inspired Indigenous people to take action to protect the land and water. First Nations were now “Idle No More.”

“It means that the people have the power,” said Nina Was’te, one of the four women from Saskatchewan who founded Idle No More, when asked what grassroots activism means to her. “People have been disengaged for far too long and are dissatisfied with the results.”

Meanwhile in Ottawa, a diverse cross-section of environmental, labour and social justice groups attended a one-day meeting hosted by the Council of Canadians. In January 2013, they came together to launch Common Causes, an assembly of movements that seeks to unite grassroots activists tackling a range of interconnected issues.

“Grassroots activism is ordinary people getting together to work on an issue, solve a common problem or create an alternative,” said Judy Rebick, a well-known writer, activist and feminist who attended the initial Common Causes meeting. “It has been on the rise now for a couple of years.”

Paul Manly, a Council of Canadians chapter activist and board member
from Nanaimo, B.C., believes that grassroots activism is definitely on the rise in his part of the country: “People are becoming more aware of the threats posed by the Harper Conservatives and are getting engaged and taking action. Gathering together to take action creates solidarity and community and eliminates the sense that we are fighting these battles alone.”

“Grassroots organizing and campaigning must be community-based, very inclusive and definitely broad,” said Roy Brady, a Council of Canadians chapter activist and board member from Peterborough, Ontario. He attributes its rise to the momentum created by Idle No More, as well as a growing number of local concerns. Brady has been instrumental in uniting local activists working on a variety of different issues under the banner of Common Causes, recently winning a fight to stop tritium pollution in the community.

**Growing pains**

Grassroots movements are not without their challenges, however. An egalitarian, leaderless structure encourages participation, but can also make it difficult to make a decision, let alone communicate it effectively. But not everyone views the lack of a traditional leadership structure as a disadvantage – some see it as quite the opposite.

“Leaders can be co-opted, intimidated and silenced,” said Manly. “When you have leaderless movements you share responsibilities, it’s more inclusive and people can get engaged in ways that are meaningful to them. With the Mid-Island chapter we intentionally have a leaderless structure without an executive; anyone who wants to lead an activity is able to pitch it to the group and take it on.”

Rebick disagrees that the lack of a single leader implies a lack of leadership. “There is leadership, but it is a new kind of leadership, not always visible. Leadership roles are spread much more broadly.”

“We have been fed the notion we will be lost without top-down leadership,” said Was’te. “The truth of it is we do not disrespect leadership, we just want to challenge what is not working.”

And what if the grassroots model of diffuse leadership doesn’t seem to be working?

“We need to remind ourselves to be creative, respectful and mindful that every person brings a gift to a group,” says Leticia Adair, a founding member of the Saint John chapter of the Council of Canadians and a board member. The chapter is currently working on a local Common Causes initiative to stop the privatization of a municipal wastewater facility. “It takes time and energy to build a movement.”

**Finding Solutions**

Being able to work on a variety of issues keeps grassroots movements nimble and striving for solutions.

“Grassroots movements today are looking to change the system, not just one or two problems,” says Rebick. “I think groups should solve the problems as they see them and not allow media or politicians to define their problems.”

Goldberg sees money as one of those problems: “What many groups are lacking is funding, which can limit capacity. With additional support, participation and funding, grassroots groups could thrive and really transform society.”

Common Causes and the Council of Canadians plan to help bring about this societal transformation, working together in support of – and with support from - the many grassroots mobilizations and campaigns that strive to build a more progressive society.

Elizabeth Berman is the Communications Manager for the Council of Canadians.
Challenging Nestlé’s Water Takings in Ontario

All around the world bottled water companies like Nestlé are depleting freshwater sources to make money. The Council of Canadians is part of the fight to say “no” to corporate greed over water, and fighting for it to be recognized as part of the commons – a shared public resource for all.

The Council of Canadians and Wellington Water Watchers (WWW), with legal representation from Ecojustice, are parties to a legal case involving Nestlé’s water withdrawals in Hillsburgh, Ontario. In February, the two groups won the right to challenge a proposed agreement between Nestlé and Ontario’s Ministry of Environment (MoE) that would permit Nestlé to take water from a shared water source during low water conditions. The agreement stems from Nestlé’s appeal of conditions in their Permit to Take Water, requiring the company to reduce its water takings during times of drought.

Nestlé has been withdrawing water from a deep aquifer well in Hillsburgh, Ontario since 2000, paying $3.71 for every million litres that it removes from the watershed. Last September, the MoE renewed Nestlé’s permit for another five years. The permit set out a mandatory restriction requiring Nestlé to reduce its maximum allowable water taking by 20 per cent during times of moderate drought.

On October 15, 2012, Nestlé filed a Notice of Appeal with respect to the permit, arguing that the mandatory restrictions were not being applied uniformly throughout the watershed, and that water-taking restrictions should be implemented by conservation authorities, not by the Ministry.

The Council of Canadians and WWW applied to intervene in the case, which both Nestlé and the Ministry argued against, but the Environmental Review Tribunal ruled in favour of our intervention because of our genuine public interest in the case.

Earlier in the year we formally requested a review of Ontario’s water-taking permit process as it applies to licences granted by the province to bottle water, urging Ontario to overhaul its “outdated and narrow approach.” We argued that the permit process is inconsistent with the Public Trust Doctrine, which asserts that certain natural resources, including groundwater, belong to all Canadians and cannot be privately owned or controlled. The doctrine recognizes the inherent importance of natural resources to individuals and to society as a whole.

The Public Trust Doctrine requires that governments fulfill legal responsibilities of a “trustee” and manage natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. It embodies key principles of environmental protection, including stewardship, communal responsibility and sustainability. Essentially, under the Public Trust Doctrine, the government holds the natural resource in trust for the benefit of the public – now and in the future.

The Council of Canadians and WWW are concerned that under the agreement struck between the MoE and Nestlé, the company will be allowed to take up to approximately 1.1 million litres of water per day from Hillsburgh for its bottling operations in Aberfoyle even during times of drought, which have recently affected the area. The City of Guelph issued a red alert last summer requiring a 20 per cent mandatory reduction in water use from Guelph residents because of drought conditions. Wellington County farmers, livestock producers and residents were seriously impacted, experiencing the worst drought in over a decade. Guelph/Eramosa Township, located at the southern end of Wellington County bordering the city of Guelph, was on Level II drought restrictions (yellow alert) well into November of last year.

Water sources are under stress from increasing commercial use, population pressure and drought-inducing climate change. A 2010 Statistics Canada study has warned that renewable water in southern Canada has declined by 8.5 per cent from 1971 to 2004. Water-taking decisions that approve large commercial uses without considering the long-term needs of the local community and environment could seriously impact freshwater sources.

Because water is a fundamental resource, the Council of Canadians and WWW will argue that the Ministry’s permitting process must recognize the urgent need to protect it in a time of growing stresses. Provincial governments are legally responsible for the protection of groundwater supplies. Ontario and other Great Lakes jurisdictions have committed to a precautionary approach in managing water. This sort of approach stems from the precautionary principle, which says that where a risk of serious and irreversible harm exists, lack of full scientific certainty should not prevent measures to protect the environment.

This case presents an exciting opportunity for the courts to recognize that the Public Trust Doctrine provides a valid legal basis for adding drought-related conditions to Nestlé’s water-taking permit, and to prioritize public rights to water over private, commercial uses.

Emma Lui is a Water Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
Few stories have sparked such outrage and galvanized Canadians with such force as the robocalls scandal. Not only has the most fundamental of our democratic rights been violated, a moral line in the sand has been crossed which transcends politics. Regardless of our differences, we all agree that deliberately tricking people out of their right to vote is categorically unethical, unacceptable and un-Canadian.

Within days, outrage transformed into powerful and vibrant demonstrations of democracy. People from all walks of life – students and veterans, leading activists and first-time protesters, voters from the left, right and centre – joined together for street rallies in their communities. Thousands filed complaints with Elections Canada, and responded to the Council of Canadians’ national election fraud questionnaire. The people of Canada demanded answers.

In testimony given last March to a House of Commons committee, Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand said, “The fact that electors . . . were misdirected by calls falsely made on behalf of Elections Canada is absolutely outrageous, should not be tolerated . . . . It’s totally unacceptable in a modern democracy.”

However, the response from our federal government was starkly different. Rather than vigorously pursuing this serious and unprecedented attack, the Harper government’s action was tepid at best. It quickly became evident that getting to the bottom of election fraud was not a federal government priority.

Enter Kay Burkhart, Ken Ferance, Yvonne Kafka, Bill Kerr, Sandra McEwing, Tom Parlee, Jeff Reid and Peggy Walsh Craig. With nothing to gain, and driven by their belief in civic duty, these eight ordinary Canadians stepped forward to defend our democracy as no one else has. They’ve taken onto their shoulders not only the restoration of voters’ rights in their ridings, but a nation’s confidence in the very integrity of our electoral process.

From the outset, the eight applicants expected an uphill battle. These are uncharted legal waters. However, the greatest challenge they would face – one they didn’t expect – would come from their own government. Over the last year, the applicants’ cases have been met by relentless and costly legal hurdles at the hands of the Conservative Party MPs in those ridings and their high-powered legal team. These hurdles aimed to discredit the applicants and stop the cases at every turn.

Thanks to remarkable support from Council of Canadians members like you, and thousands of generous donors to the Democracy 24/7 Legal Fund, the applicants successfully overcame every one of those obstacles.

Landmark “Robocalls” Legal Case Awaits Decision

More than one year has passed since journalists Stephen Maher and Glen McGregor blew the lid off of the largest and most sophisticated campaign of voter suppression in our country’s history, and since eight brave Canadians launched their landmark legal fight back.

by Jamian Logue

Left: Sandra McEwing and Peggy Walsh Craig are two of the eight brave Canadians who have challenged election fraud in Federal Court. Below: Hundreds of people – young and old – took to the streets in the spring of 2012 to protest “robocalls” that misdirected voters in the lead up to the last federal election.
It all culminated last December when these landmark cases were finally heard in Federal Court.

Over six days of hearings in Ottawa, lawyers for the applicants presented Federal Court Judge Richard Mosley with potent evidence of election fraud, which was strongly supported by expert testimony, and by compelling new evidence from Elections Canada’s ongoing internal investigation.

However, the obstructionist tactics of the Conservative Party MPs continued in court. On day one of the proceedings, Conservative Party lawyer Arthur Hamilton argued a motion on chancyparty and maintenance, alleging that the Council of Canadians had no standing in the case, and that the eight applicants were mere props the Council was using to raise money.

Tom Parlee was indignant. The applicant from the riding of Yukon had travelled to Ottawa and was present in the courtroom. “So the Conservative Party is basically saying I don’t have a mind of my own. Well, I’ve got news for them,” he said.

With the last of the Conservative Party motions dealt with, the applicants’ legal team spent the days that followed presenting the heart of the cases. In great detail, Steven Shrybman, lawyer for the applicants, walked the court through the covert operations and sophisticated telecommunications systems used to make the fraudulent robocalls, the independent polling data that revealed the calls were widespread and targeted, and the powerful reports from Elections Canada’s investigators that support the applicants’ contention that the campaign of voter suppression was ultimately effective.

After closing arguments, Judge Mosley announced he would deliver his ruling by spring. Then, in late February, came news the judge had admitted new evidence in the case – documents recently filed by Elections Canada that contain 45 complaints from Rogers telephone customers who reported fraudulent calls around the 2011 federal election.

Of particular significance is a declaration from a voter who “was deceived by a misleading call, went to the wrong location, and then did not vote.”

In his decision, Judge Mosley said of the new evidence: “I find that it may affect the decision that I will make. It will therefore serve the interests of justice and assist the Court for it to be admitted to the record.”

At the time of publication of Canadian Perspectives, the court’s ruling has not yet come down. But regardless of how the court rules, these eight brave individuals – and your support of them – have already achieved significant victories.

The first victory is that these cases even reached Federal Court. The Canada Elections Act has never been used to defend voters’ rights against election fraud in this manner. The second is that Canadians are now very aware that vigilance is required to defend our democracy. Whoever was behind this will be facing a far more educated public in the next election. The third victory is that new evidence has come to light as a direct result of these cases, including data that reveals that tens of thousands of Canadians across the country received fraudulent calls after being targeted as not supportive of the Conservative Party. And compelling Elections Canada evidence was made public, which otherwise may have remained under wraps.

Simply put, without these applicants and their cases, this scandal would be long gone from the headlines.

As Canadians everywhere eagerly await the court’s ruling, we hope all Council members recognize the good that has already come of this, and take great pride in being a part of this historic legal fight.

Jamian Logue is the Director of Development for the Council of Canadians.
TransCanada’s Plan to Send Tar Sands Crude East – and Beyond
by Maryam Adrangi

When New Brunswick Premier David Alward began speaking with oil industry representatives about getting tar sands to the port of Saint John, it became clear that Easterners could face the serious environmental threats that come with pipelines and massive oil tankers – the same threats facing people on the West Coast today.

TransCanada Corp. is looking to convert a partially used natural gas pipeline that brings gas to Quebec to an oil pipeline that will send tar sands crude to Eastern Canada for refining, and then into massive shipping tankers for export. These plans could not have come at a better time for the oil industry as fierce opposition to export pipelines such as the Northern Gateway, Trans Mountain, and Keystone XL put a chokehold on further tar sands expansion.

The company wants to convert the pipe to an oil pipeline, and extend it to the Irving refinery in Saint John, New Brunswick. Eighty per cent of the intended project is already constructed. If there are significant barriers to constructing the pipeline all the way to Saint John, TransCanada may take advantage of the ports in Montreal and Quebec City. Tankers would then be sent through the St. Lawrence River to transport the crude.

Proponents of the TransCanada pipeline say that it will reduce Canada’s dependence on oil imports. But there is good reason to believe that this pipeline isn’t about providing people in Canada with oil. TransCanada representatives have already said the company plans to send oil to the highest bidder. Economists have identified the “highest bidders” as international buyers in foreign markets, not domestic consumers.

The oil sector and many politicians are looking for ways to get tar sands crude to Asia. Politically, it may be easier to sell the conversion of an old pipeline rather than proposing the construction of a completely new pipeline. Proponents also want to get crude to India and the European Union – basically to any country that will pay top dollar.

 “[Oil companies] tell us they can get higher prices for exports in foreign markets,” says Robyn Allan, a former CEO of the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia who is now an independent economist. Then, she says, the companies will ask Canadians to pay more. “They fully intend to charge these higher prices to Canadian consumers and businesses.” Export pipelines will mean higher oil prices for people and larger profits for the oil companies.

There is another solution to reducing dependence on oil imports: we must reduce our dependence on oil. The federal government can – and must – redirect subsidies from the fossil fuel industry to sectors that will reduce Canada’s dependence on fossil fuels altogether. These sectors include public mass transit and building retrofits, which create up to four times as many jobs as the fossil fuel industry per $100,000 invested.

No public input
There has been little information shared publicly about TransCanada’s pipeline proposal. Politicians and TransCanada Corp. representatives are talking with each other, but people along the route of the pipeline are being left in the dark. Last summer, one Saint John city councillor said the pipeline talks are moving along swiftly: “things have progressed [to the point] that they have their imaginary pipeline . . . already made.”

This past February, Premier Alward spoke with Quebec Premier Pauline Marois, hoping to bring her onside with the pipeline project. Still, little has been said publicly in Quebec. It raises the question: If this pipeline is such a good idea, why aren’t people hearing more details about it?

Proposed export pipelines to bring fossil fuels to the West Coast have been met with fierce opposition from people living along the routes, and from many others who are acting in solidarity. More than 130 First Nations have signed the “Save the Fraser Declaration,” opposing tar sands projects (including pipelines and tankers) from crossing their territories. At the 2012 Union of B.C. Municipalities, participants representing cities across B.C. passed a resolution opposing “projects that would lead to the expansion of oil tanker traffic through B.C.’s coastal waters.” Communities along the pipeline routes are sounding the alarm about the environmental devastation that happens as the result of a spill, and are voicing concern about further tar sands expansion.

Let’s hope that the campaigns to fight pipelines in B.C. do not just send the problem east.

Maryam Adrangi is the Energy and Climate Justice Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
Informed and committed members have always been the Council’s greatest strength. By harnessing the power of our collective voices and the volunteer energy of people, together we are able to bring about meaningful change in communities across Canada.

As a membership-based organization, our campaign efforts are almost entirely supported by generous donations from people like you. Our independence as an organization is maintained by not accepting any money from corporations or governments.

Please join us in reflecting on the positive change you helped make possible in 2012.
Our organization unites people from coast to coast to take action for a better Canada and a fairer world. With a network of 60 volunteer chapters across Canada, we organize strategic campaigns to protect water, strengthen public health care, and demand trade and climate justice.

There are many people who help in these efforts, including our tireless National Chairperson Maude Barlow, our national Board of Directors, our staff in Ottawa and in our regional offices across Canada, our committed chapter activists who put these campaigns and progressive issues into action, and of course our vibrant membership base whose commitment and generous support make it all possible.

The year 2012 was filled with many campaign highlights and victories. Here are just some of the ways you helped make a difference.

**Defending democracy**
When reports began to emerge in early 2012 of allegations of widespread voter suppression through targeted “robo-calls” campaigns in the May 2011 federal election, the Council of Canadians jumped into action. In March 2012, we announced our support for legal applications launched by eight brave Canadians who are seeking to overturn federal election results in their ridings on the basis of election fraud. By December, these historic legal cases were in Federal Court despite several attempts by Conservative Party lawyers to have the case dismissed. Thanks to the generous support of people who have donated, and continue to donate to the Democracy 24/7 Legal Fund, we have raised awareness about rampant election fraud and dirty tricks. We brought new evidence to light and continue to fight for accountability. These historic legal cases are nothing short of a true fight for democratic rights, and we hope you share the pride of being a part of them.

**Sinking the Harper agenda**
It is clear that Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative government are systematically eroding, dismantling and endangering key programs and values in this country. Attacks on public services, workers, unions, immigrants, environmental protections, public health care and other groups and services are fundamentally changing Canada as we know it. Massive omnibus budgets are gutting important environmental legislations and much-needed programs.

In September 2012 we helped build broad support by organizing a civil society summit of more than 50 organizations to find ways to collaborate to challenge and oppose the Harper agenda.

In October, we gathered in Nanaimo, B.C., for an amazingly successful conference and annual meeting under the banner of “Sinking the Harper Agenda.” Hundreds of people joined us for a standing-room-only public forum, panels and workshops, and as we rallied in the streets. While in Nanaimo we also celebrated the launch of the Maude Barlow Social Justice Fund. In commemoration of her 25 years as National Chairperson and her life’s work spent in steadfast defence, promotion and pursuit of social justice, the fund will help provide the Council with long-term stability and effectiveness in fighting for social justice. Visit our website at www.canadians.org/join to find out more about how you can make a donation to the fund.
Protecting water
The Council has always been a leader in fights to protect Canada’s water. In 2012 we turned more communities “blue” with our Blue Communities Project. Through this project, we give people the tools they need to encourage their local governments to recognize water as a human right, promote publicly financed water and wastewater facilities, and ban the purchase and sale of bottled water in public facilities. In 2012 we celebrated the addition of eight new blue communities.

We continued to push the federal government to drop “Schedule 2,” a legal loophole in the Fisheries Act that allows mining companies to permanently destroy freshwater lakes and rivers with their toxic waste. We joined with the Tsilhqot’in First Nation in their fight to stop the Prosperity Mine near Williams Lake and celebrated a federal decision to reject Taseko Mine’s plans to drain Teztan Biny (Fish Lake). The celebration was short-lived, however, as the mining company submitted new plans later in the year. We also continued our commitment as part of the Sandy Pond Alliance in Newfoundland to challenge the legality of Schedule 2 in Federal Court.

To help forge links and build relationships in communities surrounding the Great Lakes, we launched the eight-city “Great Lakes Need Great Friends” tour in May to educate, raise awareness and encourage action for these vital waters. With a patchwork of limited government protection that is hampered by inadequate funding and differing political priorities, the Great Lakes urgently need people to join together to forge a new future for them to ensure the lakes will thrive for generations to come. We look forward to the second leg of the tour this spring. Visit www.canadians.org/greatlakes for all the details.

In a local fight to protect groundwater, we celebrated the withdrawal of plans for a mega quarry in Melancthon, Ontario. Thousands of Council of Canadians members added their voices to the groundswell of community support against the mega quarry by signing petitions, writing letters and contacting local politicians.

The Council’s Blue Planet Project plays a key role in the global water justice movement. Through it, we fought for water justice internationally and continued our work with allies from around the world to inform, motivate and inspire people and governments to implement the United Nation’s declaration of water as a human right. We put a spotlight on the Canadian government’s shameful record on the right to water, particularly as it relates to mining and the commodification of water abroad. We lobbied for action here in Canada where many communities, including First Nations, do not have access to the clean water resources they need to live. In June 2012, we “Shouted Out Against Mining Injustice” and brought together activists who are working to stop water and human rights abuses by Canadian mining companies here in Canada and abroad for a two-day international conference in Vancouver, B.C.

Demanding energy and climate justice
With growing concern about the grim realities of climate change and diminishing energy resources globally, we are supporting communities fighting energy projects that will destroy their land, water and air, and are pushing the Canadian government for strong policies that protect our environment and focus on renewable and sustainable energy solutions.

In 2012, we rallied to halt the environmentally destructive tar sands and fossil fuel pipelines. The fossil fuel industry, such as tar sands in Alberta and fracking operations across Canada, continue to fuel our economy at the expense of poisoning water, polluting air and harming communities. Working
with affected communities, we helped raise awareness about the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline, the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion and the Pacific Trail pipeline – massive projects that will have devastating social and environmental impacts. In October 2012, we organized a six-city “No Pipelines, No Tankers!” tour in communities along the pipelines’ routes, helping to connect and mobilize people against these massive projects. This past February we were at the Forward On Climate rally in Washington, D.C., adding a much-needed Canadian voice to the crowd of 50,000 people who were calling on President Obama to stop the KXL pipeline, which, if approved, will send tar sands crude from Alberta to the United States for refining.

Pushing for fair trade
The Council of Canadians has a strong history of speaking out against trade deals that hurt people, the environment and social policies. We are fighting for trade agreements that put people’s rights ahead of corporate profits. In 2012, our focus remained on the Canada–European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). We raised awareness about the deal here in Canada and overseas. We encouraged people to get involved locally, and gave them the tools they need to help pass municipal resolutions against CETA in their communities. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our members and chapters, more than 40 resolutions have been passed in communities across Canada.

We continued to speak out against corporate globalization, which puts power in the hands of big businesses. Global markets, big banks, food and commodity speculation, and irresponsible governments have plunged our world into economic, environmental and social crises that are widening the gap between rich and poor. We are part of a global movement bringing together trade activists from the Global South and Global North with the common goal of social and economic justice for all.

Strengthening public health care
We lobbied for a strengthened and expanded public health care system in Canada in the 2014 Health Care Accord, a deal between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments that will set the course for medicare for the next 10 years. We are pushing for a deal that strengthens and expands medicare to include a national pharmacare program and better long-term care, home care and mental health care so people have access to the services they need. In 2012 we were in Victoria, B.C. and Halifax, Nova Scotia, speaking to the media and turning up the political heat on premiers who were meeting to negotiate the new accord. With the generous help of our donors we placed a quarter-page ad asking: “Where’s Harper?” The Prime Minister and the federal government have been conspicuously absent from negotiations. In
December, as part of national lobby actions, we met with MPs and decision makers and reminded them that health care remains Canadians’ top priority. We will continue to push politicians for a stronger public health care system and a better deal between the federal government and the provinces in the 2014 Health Care Accord.

**Thank you to our donors**

Our work is made possible by the generosity of like-minded people who believe social, economic and environmental justice is in everyone’s best interest. With your membership and donations, we made great strides in our campaigns in 2012. We garnered hundreds of media hits; organized major events in communities across Canada and around the world; held conferences and speaking tours; produced educational factsheets, brochures and hard-hitting reports; provided daily updated news on our website at www.canadians.org and delivered informative articles in our membership magazine, *Canadian Perspectives*.

These remarkable achievements are made possible by our members’ financial contributions. Close to $4.5 million was received from memberships and contributions this fiscal year, which represents 92 per cent of total revenue. We have provided a Summary Statement of Revenue and Expenditure below that shows our sources of revenue and how we spent this funding.

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**Your donations make a difference**

We extend a most heartfelt thank you to all of our donors for supporting our work!

The Council of Canadians would like to extend a special thank you to members of our Citizens’ Agenda Fund (CAF) whose leadership-level contributions have played a crucial role in our achievements in 2012. Please visit our website at www.canadians.org/CAF to see a list of our CAF members.

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### The Council of Canadians: Summary Statement of Revenue and Expenditure For the Year Ended June 30, 2012

#### Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>June 30, 2012</th>
<th>June 30, 2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memberships and supporters</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$4,861,669</td>
<td>$4,675,063</td>
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#### Expenses

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<th>June 30, 2011</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Regional offices and chapter funding</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political campaigns</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings, conferences, newsletters</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin, Executive and program support</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>5,326,071</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,009,546</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Bequest**

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted surplus / (deficit) for the year</td>
<td>($187,213)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REVENUE SOURCES 2011-2012**

- **Memberships and supporters** – 92%
- **Foundations** – 7%
- **Interest and other** – 1%

**EXPENDITURES 2011-2012**

- **Regional offices and Chapter funding** – 12%
- **Communications** – 7%
- **Political campaigns** – 27%
- **Development** – 30%
- **Meetings, conferences, newsletters** – 4%
- **Admin, Executive and program support** – 20%

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**NOTE:** The increase in political campaign expenses is caused by expenses related to the election fraud legal cases, the mining conference and Blue Planet Project work on the World Water Forum in France. Some of these expenses were offset by foundation grants and significant donations from supporters.
Our chance to say “thank you!”

Just as important as keeping our members informed and updated on the Council’s important campaigns is taking the time to properly thank you for your generous donations that make our work possible.

Every week, staff gather in the Council’s boardroom for “thank you parties,” where recognition letters to members for your donations are folded and stuffed by hand with loving care (and the occasional paper cut). “It’s always a highlight of my week,” says Major and Legacy Gifts Officer Hélène Bertrand. “We have awesome members, and it’s a way I can show my personal appreciation for their generous support.”

So when that thank you letter arrives in your mailbox, know that the entire Council family is behind it.

Join us in Saskatoon for the Council’s Annual Conference and Business Meeting October 25-27

This year, our Annual General Meeting moves to the prairie plains in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. We will bring together members, chapter activists, supporters and allies for a dynamic weekend event that includes a public forum, workshops, panels and more. Be sure to mark your calendars!

The Council of Canadians’ Annual Conference and Business Meeting
October 25-27
Delta Bessborough Hotel
601 Spadina Crescent East
Saskatoon SK S7K 3G8

Conference hotel reservations
To obtain the negotiated group rate of $175 per night + taxes you must book by September 24, 2013, by calling toll free 1-800-268-1135, or locally 306-244-5521. Please state group name “Council of Canadians Conference and AGM” when booking.

To book online, go to www.deltabessborough.com/sdthecou

Advance registration: August 7 – October 17
Registration information will be posted at www.canadians.org starting August 7. Advance registration closes at 5:00 p.m. EDT October 17.

Resolutions: August 26
Proposed resolutions must be received by August 26. After this date, only emergency resolutions on issues that could not have been foreseen by the deadline date will be considered.

Nominations: September 23
Advance nominations for the Board of Directors must be received by September 23. This allows time for the nominating committee to make recommendations to ensure a diverse Board. Nominations will be accepted at the AGM until 2:00 p.m. CST on Saturday, October 26.

In addition to the regular slate of candidates, two regional chapter representatives to the Board from the Prairies and Atlantic regions will be nominated and elected in a process exclusive to chapters. These board members will be confirmed by the membership at the annual business meeting (ABM).

Ensure your membership is up to date
Being a Council member “in good standing” allows you to vote on resolutions and Board nominations at the ABM. To be a member “in good standing” you need to have donated $6 or more at least 30 days before the ABM (by September 27, 2013), and no more than 12 months before October 27, 2013.
Clockwise from top left: Conference participants take to the streets in a rally; Council Board member Bill Moore-Kilgannon and National Chairperson Maude Barlow present Lois Frank with an “Activist of the Year” award; people participate in one of many workshops; at the rally; keynote speakers Linda McQuaig, Bill McKibben, Maude Barlow and Snuneymuxw First Nation Chief Douglas White.

Making Waves and Sinking the Harper Agenda in Nanaimo

Hundreds of people joined us in Nanaimo, B.C. in late October for a movement-building conference with environmental, health, youth, Indigenous and labour groups. The conference focused on ways we can work together to fight Prime Minister Harper’s austerity agenda and mining and pipeline projects which threaten our environment. Keynote speakers included Snuneymuxw Elder and Chief Douglas White, Maude Barlow, Linda McQuaig and Bill McKibben.
Chapter Action Updates

by Philippe-A Charbonneau

Council of Canadians chapters have been busy fighting the Harper agenda, and pushing to protect our water, land and air; strengthen public health care; and support fair trade in communities across Canada over the past several months. Here are a few highlights:

DEFEND OUR COAST
In October 2012, many chapter activists participated in the “Defend Our Coast” action in Victoria, B.C., showing strong opposition to proposed pipelines and the environmentally destructive tar sands. The Comox Valley chapter gathered 44 members and supporters and bussed to Victoria to join the action.

Chapters that couldn’t make it to Victoria organized actions in their communities. In Campbell River, more than 60 people rallied in front of their local MLA office. The Campbell River Mirror reported, “Council of Canadians Campbell River chapter spokesman Richard Hagensen said: ‘We are protesting both the Enbridge and the Kinder Morgan pipelines. We are concerned about the possibility of spillage. Also, government should be investing in sustainable energy like solar power, tidal power and wind power and not subsidizing the oil companies.’”

NATIONAL MEDICARE WEEK
December 2-8, 2012 was National Medicare Week. During the week we showed Members of Parliament that health care remains a top priority of Canadians and that we want medicare protected, strengthened, and extended through a new 2014 Health Accord. Chapters joined the medicare week actions, pushing for a commitment to pharmacare, a national strategy on aging that includes home, community and long-term care, and better mental health services.

Chapters also called and wrote to their MPs and tweeted health care-related messages during Question Period in the House of Commons.

IDLE NO MORE
In December, the Idle No More movement was gaining strength and momentum across Canada, and our chapters were there to lend their support and join in the events.

As noted on an Idle No More Facebook page: “Idle No More, [started by] a group of Indigenous women, has made a peaceful call to action requesting acts of solidarity against governments and industries that use legislation and disregard free, prior and informed consent to further their agendas in the name of profit and progress, ignoring the natural law to live as one with Mother Earth.”

That month and since then, many of our chapters have participated in marches, rallies, round dances, information sessions, dialogues and chants; have helped share petitions; and have joined other creative actions in support of the Idle No More movement.

PEOPLE’S SOCIAL FORUM
In January, Council of Canadians chapter activists attended the General Assembly for the People’s Social Forum in Ottawa.

The assembly brought together more than 150 activists from across the country. Participants agreed that a People’s Social Forum should take place in August 2014. While a location has not yet been determined, suggestions have included either Ottawa or a location near the tar sands in Alberta.

COMMON CAUSES
On January 28, Common Causes, an assembly of social movements dedicated to defending democracy, the environment and human rights, was launched. Council chapters and members took to the streets of their communities for family-friendly rallies under the Common Causes banner to send MPs returning to the House of Commons a clear message: people are coming together like never before to challenge the Harper agenda and to bring about the positive change that’s urgently needed.

Common Causes will continue to build its base at the local level, in communities across the country. We’ve already seen wonderful examples of this with the formation of Common Causes groups in Peterborough, Ont., Saint John, N.B., and Nanaimo, B.C.

CETA RESOLUTION
In early February, the city of Nelson, B.C., passed a resolution about the Canada–European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), asking the federal government to exempt the city from the deal if trade principles set by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities are not followed.

Canada’s municipalities deserve a say in CETA negotiations. A growing number of municipalities, school boards and municipal associations have raised concerns about CETA’s procurement chapter. Most of them want to see the municipal sector excluded entirely from the deal. In total, more than 40 cities, towns, school boards and municipal associations in eight provinces have passed resolutions on CETA, thanks in large part to the amazing work by our chapter activists.

WELCOME!
We would like to extend a warm welcome to our four newest chapters: Fredericton, New Brunswick; Thunder Bay and Brant, Ontario; and the Northwest Territories!

Philippe-A Charbonneau is the Political Team Assistant for the Council of Canadians.
Chapter Activist Profile

Mary McCandless, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Located at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, Manitoba’s capital city is steeped in a long tradition of radical politics – from the Red River Rebellion of the 1860s to the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Mary McCandless is the chapter chair of the Winnipeg Chapter, one of the many activist groups keeping Winnipeg’s radical tradition alive in the 21st century.

How did the Winnipeg Chapter get started?
In 2008, community concern started to grow around the municipal government’s plans to create a city-owned corporate utility and a public-private partnership with Veolia [a private multinational water company] to manage the city’s water and wastewater services. The Winnipeg Chapter, which had been inactive for some time, was rejuvenated for the fight and joined with many other groups in the defence of our public wastewater services. The chapter brought an enthusiastic new perspective to Winnipeg activism.

The campaign to keep Winnipeg’s water system public was the chapter’s major focus for a number of years. What did you learn from that campaign?
Focusing on a single, close-to-home issue helped to rebuild a strong core membership over time. Through co-operation with partner groups, we achieved some significant victories in the campaign. As new details of the deal were released and important aspects changed, we needed to remain flexible and try to react in a timely manner. Sometimes we missed the mark, but we always stayed focused and regrouped for the next action.

What campaigns or initiatives is the chapter currently involved in?
We’ve been very active in supporting the campaigns to save the Canadian Wheat Board and the Experimental Lakes Area, and also stood with Occupy Winnipeg and now Idle No More. After focusing much of our efforts over the last two years on stopping the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in Manitoba, we are now turning our attention to improved collaboration between local activist groups, water issues, and preparation for the 2014 municipal election.

The chapter has used creative actions to highlight issues. What are some of the creative things you’ve done, and why do you think it’s important in your activism?
During our CETA campaign, “CETA Clause” sent each MLA a Christmas letter accompanied by a gift-wrapped lump of coal to emphasize the potential effect of CETA on the local economy. For Valentine’s Day we delivered an enormous heart created from 300 of the 3,000 “Keep Manitoba out of CETA” postcards. Each MLA also received an individual heart with a message of love for Manitoba, and we made a video of the whole action. During Occupy Winnipeg, we set up a tent, pinned our banner to it, and held chapter meetings nearby as a way to publicly support Occupy and connect with a whole new group of dedicated activists.

Each time we engage creatively, we reach observers in a direct and memorable way. The security guards tasked with escorting us around the Legislature slipped easily from laughing about our giant Valentine’s heart to a conversation about CETA. Conservative-leaning friends and co-workers enjoyed the joke of our “down-town office” turning out to be an old tent at Occupy, and through that opening became more willing to learn more about the reasons for Occupy. It all leads to communication and co-operation between people who might not normally have had anything meaningful to say to each other.

Another area the Winnipeg Chapter has really excelled at is in using online and social media in its campaigns. What advice would you give to other chapters expanding their online activism?
We keep connected to our growing network of collaborators through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and our website. We also have begun to dabble with newer social media like Diaspora and Tumblr. We use our Facebook group for open discussion amongst members, even to the point of almost never deleting posts. The Facebook page is for chapter announcements. Whenever we release a blog, or launch an action, we send a mass message to our ever-growing email list, then post to the Facebook page and share it with the group, and then “like” and share on our own walls, while doing the same in Twitter. It’s an effective way to reach a large audience using our own networks.

For more information about how to join a chapter in your area, visit our website at www.canadians.org or call us toll-free at 1-800-387-7177.
Maude Barlow Shares Her Legacy

By Hélène Bertrand

For almost three decades, Council of Canadians members like you have helped to bring about transformative social, economic and environmental change here in Canada and beyond. While our country and our world face serious and persistent issues, we are without question better off today due to our collective advocacy. This is a legacy we can be proud to leave to our children and grandchildren, who are now joining the Council of Canadians and taking up the causes for positive social change.

A simple, yet powerful way Council members choose to commemorate their lifetime of activism is through planning a legacy gift in their will. For National Chairperson Maude Barlow, her decision to leave a legacy gift to the Council of Canadians was deeply personal and profoundly gratifying. She shares, in her own words, why she chose to leave a gift for the Council in her will.

“For as long as I can remember I’ve loved this country. I’ve always believed that I’ve been blessed to live in the greatest land on Earth – and that I share this place with good and decent people who want the best for themselves and their neighbours.

“I have always believed that the human chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and that no one should be left behind in the inevitable changes that happen over time. I was raised to be honest, to be fair, and to be unafraid to speak out when I see things happen that just aren’t right.

“When we came together to form the Council of Canadians many years ago, we shared a determination and a passion that the voice of everyday Canadians must be heard in the face of momentous issues that would so deeply affect our future. That determination and passion remains with me today, and I’m sure it will remain with me until I draw my last breath.

“Looking back over decades of activism with the Council, I couldn’t feel more deeply that I made the right choice to commit myself to this cause, this movement and this organization. I can’t imagine how my time, my energies and my passions could have been better spent than in advancing Canada’s common causes with tens of thousands of like-minded people from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

“Those of us who lead the activist life know and appreciate that we receive more from our work than we give. We are given the gift of belonging with fellow travellers who share our deepest beliefs, values and convictions. We are never isolated. We are never alone. We know that we will end our days on this Earth possessing the fundamental satisfaction that we have spent our lives well – and that we have done right by each other. I can’t imagine a gift richer than that.

“As I write this, I am 65 years old. Hopefully, I’ll have the good fortune to continue my life’s work for many years to come. My firmest intention is to remain immersed in the struggle for Canada’s future for as long as my mind, body and soul enable me.

“But when I look long into the future, I have a deep and abiding confidence that the movement and the Council will move forward and thrive beyond me. I know in my heart and soul that Canadians will always need us to be their voice, their advocates, and their champions.

“When my end draws near, I will consider my years with the Council and its membership to be an important part of the footprint I’ll leave behind in this world. I’ll feel joy in the knowledge that, in my own small way, I’ve contributed to humanity’s future to the best of my ability.

“This is a legacy in which I take great pride. I hope that you share my feelings of belonging to something truly special, of giving in your own way to the betterment of our human community, and of believing in something greater than yourself. A legacy gift is a wonderful way to commemorate our collective actions.

Thank you for your commitment, your loyalty and your tireless support of the great work we do together.”

For information on how you can help shape Canada’s future with a legacy gift to the Council of Canadians, please contact Hélène Bertrand at hbertrand@canadians.org, or by calling toll-free 1-800-387-7177, ext. 244.
Canada’s Record on the Human Right to Water Must Be Challenged Internationally

This April in Geneva, Switzerland, the international community will evaluate Canada’s human rights record through the Universal Periodic Review process of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC).

The Council of Canadians’ Blue Planet Project has made a submission to the HRC, urging that the UN and its member states apply the 2010 General Assembly resolution and subsequent HRC resolutions on the human right to water and sanitation in this process.

Having recognized water and sanitation as human rights, the international community now bears the responsibility to uphold this basic right by taking Canada to task on its glaring violations of the human right to water.

The Blue Planet Project was in Geneva to highlight the gaps in drinking water and sanitation services for First Nations communities, the stripping of environmental safeguards for fresh water, Canada’s growing support for a mining industry that violates the human right to water around the world, and the push for local governments to turn public services over to private corporations.

First Nations’ drinking water
While the majority of people living in Canada, particularly those living in urban centres, enjoy excellent drinking water and sanitation services, many First Nations communities lack access to clean, safe water. This underscores Canada’s blatant failure to respect obligations towards Indigenous communities.

Between 2009 and 2011, the federal government conducted an assessment of the water and wastewater systems across Canada that serve First Nations communities. Five hundred and seventy-one First Nations communities participated, representing 97 per cent of First Nations communities in the country.

The report highlighted that more than one-third of the water systems for these communities were determined to be “high risk,” meaning the water quality was already poor enough to be detrimental to health and safety, or water systems were deficient enough to cause health problems for community members. Twenty-five per cent of the First Nations population across Canada was found to be living in communities served by high-risk water systems. A total of 312 systems did not meet Canadian health standards for drinking water.

Canada’s failure to meet the drinking water and sanitation needs of First Nations communities has impacted people’s health and well-being. Chiefs in Manitoba recently sounded the alarm about the propensity of First Nations homes to be hardest hit by epidemic outbreaks as a result of poor access to water and sanitation. In 2009, the Canadian Medical Association reported that “whereas Aboriginal Canadians make up 3.4% of the population with...
International Water Campaigner Meera Karunananthan recently visited Mexico to speak out against Canadian mining companies. The Council of Canadians’ Blue Planet Project works in Canada and around the world on the implementation of the human right to water.

1.14 million people), they accounted for 16% of admissions to hospital during the first wave of the pandemic, and 43% of Aboriginal patients had underlying medical conditions."

**Failure to protect fresh water**

It is vital that the right to water and sanitation be linked to environmental safeguards that ensure source water protection and preserve water supplies for future generations.

Canada’s scientific and environmental communities are outraged by the federal government’s gutting of environmental regulations through the omnibus budget Bill C-38. The dangerous and far-reaching implications of this bill on water resources have been well argued by a number of environmental organizations, including West Coast Environmental Law, MiningWatch Canada and Ecojustice.

The Harper government’s prediction of $500 billion in investments in extractive industries over the next decade would not be possible without dismantling these environmental safeguards.

“Lake dumping” in Canada serves as a case in point. The Harper government further facilitated the practice of allowing mining corporations to dump their toxic waste directly into freshwater bodies with the addition of “Schedule 2,” a loophole in the Federal Fisheries Act. As a result, more and more watersheds are being threatened in Canada.

The Blue Planet Project is working with allies to challenge the federal government’s stripping of environmental regulations that safeguard our country’s freshwater supplies.

**Canadian mining abroad**

According to University of Ottawa Law Professor Lynda Collins, under international law Canada is not allowed to interfere with the rights of other states’ citizens. This means that Canada must ensure that Canadian corporations comply with international human rights standards and environmental policies of host states.

However, it has been well documented that Canadian mining activities in other countries severely impact the human right to water for citizens in those regions. Throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa, people have decried the mining industry’s excessive water use and its subsequent contamination. International bodies have condemned these situations. For example, Goldcorp’s Marlin Mine in Guatemala was ordered to shut down in 2010 by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, but it remained in operation with the support of the Guatemalan government. This shows how communities are not able to protect their rights from being violated by big mining corporations.

With Canadian companies accounting for nearly 75 per cent of the international mining industry, Canada must answer for the industry’s human rights violations.

**Water privatization**

Water privatization has led to violations of the human right to water around the world. It has been shown that privatization leads to higher costs for people to access clean, safe water, leaving those without money unable to afford this basic human right.

In Canada, the vast majority of water and sanitation services are publicly owned and operated, but the failure to adequately fund these services, and the imposition of funding conditions that force cash-strapped municipalities to consider private sector involvement, have made it more difficult for communities to keep their water and sanitation services public.

The Canadian government must support public ownership and control of water and sanitation services by providing adequate funding to municipalities rather than forcing them to put these vital services up for sale.

While the government finally claims to recognize water and sanitation as a human right, it has a long way to go towards its implementation. Canada does not have a plan or dedicated funding for the realization of the right to water and sanitation. Meanwhile, it continues to fall shamefully short on its obligations towards Indigenous communities, has severely weakened environmental legislation threatening source water supplies throughout the country, continues to promote a mining industry that is responsible for grave human rights and environmental violations, and is undermining the ability of communities to maintain public water and sanitation services.

Water is a human right. It is time for Canada to implement it.

Meera Karunananthan is an International Water Campaigner for the Council of Canadian’s Blue Planet Project.
In November 2011, in the wake of one of the first meetings between provincial and territorial ministers to chart a new 10-year health care accord, former Saskatchewan premier Roy Romanow warned that requiring provinces to cover more of the cost of funding health care services would create a “patchwork quilt Canada” of health coverage, with the have-not provinces losing out.

Romanow, who in 2001 headed a royal commission on the future of health care in Canada, told CTV’s Question Period that the Harper government’s plan to reduce federal funding for health care would seriously endanger medicare. “It would be the end of a national program of medicare,” he said.

The future of public health care is at a tipping point. Not only do we face the “patchwork quilt” Romanow warned us about, but without a new deal between the federal government and the provinces and territories in a new health accord, the seams on the quilt will start to rip apart.

We have 17 different health care systems in Canada – one for each province and territory plus federally administered systems for RCMP, military, prisons, and First Nations. The principle of portability in the Canada Health Act allows us to travel across the country and access services in any province or territory. However, people are starting to realize that not all provinces and territories cover the same services, and what is considered “medically necessary” in one area of Canada might not be covered in another.

When medicare was first introduced in Canada, the average age of Canadians was 27. Today, this average has increased by 20 years. We should be expanding the definition of “medically necessary” to cover additional services that more appropriately reflect the new Canadian demographic. Supporters of public health care, including the Council of Canadians, are calling on the federal, provincial and territorial governments to expand medicare and cover areas such as home and community care, including long-term care, mental and dental care, and pharmacare.

With the expiry of the 10-year 2004 Health Accord – and discussions for what the 2014 accord could contain – there is an opportunity for premiers and the prime minister to discuss the challenges in health care, work to protect the public health care system from those who want to profit from it, set new national standards on care, and implement new innovative and evidence-based programming to ensure all provinces and territories are able to offer the highest quality of care to their residents.

However, instead of working together to build a better health care system in Canada, the Harper government has downloaded more responsibility for health care onto the provinces and territories through cuts to health care for refugees, veterans and the RCMP.

In December 2011, the Harper government shockingly announced that the 2014 Health Accord will reduce the Canada Health Transfer (the portion that the federal government pays for health care) by $36 billion. Not surprisingly, the funding cut starts in 2016, after the next federal election.

The $36 billion reduction will mean that the 50-50 per cent cost-sharing agreement made by the federal and provincial/territorial governments when medicare was first negotiated will become 18 and 82 per cent respectively. Poorer provinces will be the worst off. With less money for health care, they will likely need to shorten the list of “medically necessary” services, and governments will inevitably look to more private, for-profit service delivery.

The Council of Canadians is working with national and provincial allies to rally Canadians against the cuts and to promote evidence-based solutions to our health care challenges.

The Council of the Federation – a meeting of Canada’s premiers – will be held July 24-26 in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. This will be our last chance to push for improvements in the 2014 Health Accord, and to make Canadians aware of the devastating cuts and creeping privatization that is already happening in our health care system.

Join us in Niagara-on-the-Lake and make noise for public health care

We want to fill the streets with people in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and have a strong public showing in support of a strengthened and enhanced public health care system. Visit our website at www.canadians.org, or call your local regional office for up-to-date information about rally plans. If you live in the vicinity, we hope you can join us!

Adrienne Silnicki is the Health Care Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
CETA, TPP, FIPA, TTIP: Forget the acronyms and attack the fundamental flaws with free trade

The Council of Canadians has been fighting the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) for four years now and we have good signs of progress. A transatlantic corporate rights pact to rival NAFTA continues to elude the Harper government, pushed to defend CETA from accusations it will increase drug prices, increase our trade deficit, ban “buy local” policies, and go further than past deals in the rights corporations will have to challenge public interest legislation and decisions.

The CETA talks hit two more important roadblocks this spring. The first was news that CETA could undermine Canada’s prudential banking and financial rules – the ones that shielded us to some extent from the recent global economic meltdown. There was immediate public outrage and disbelief that CETA could further deregulate the Canadian and European financial sectors when even the International Monetary Fund, the G20 and other very mainstream economic institutions admit the need for more, not less, scrutiny of banking transactions.

Then there is U.S. President Barack Obama’s decision that he too would like a “comprehensive” free trade deal with Europe. That set of transatlantic negotiations could begin as early as April and risk obscuring CETA if Canada and the E.U. cannot wrap things up by then. And let’s not forget about the Trans-Pacific Partnership talks that Canada joined, with Mexico, late last year. The acronyms are piling up, but we can’t let this discourage or distract us. European, Canadian, U.S. and Mexican trade justice activists are building bridges across the Atlantic and Pacific to strengthen the resistance to this global corporate attack on democracy.

CETA, TPP and TTIP: Same problems, different package

Neither CETA nor the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) are about improved trade so much as an improved (or, in other words, deregulated) corporate environment on both sides of the Atlantic. The irritants are all regula-
trade agreement – even with a partner from the U.S. are important economic policy goals for Canada,” says Stanford. “But merely signing another free trade agreement – even with a partner as important as the E.U. – has no chance of achieving either goal.”

Anti-TPP meet Anti-FIPA meet Anti-CETA meet Anti-TTIP

With all these new trade and investment deals in play it’s sometimes difficult to find a strong footing from which to take them on. There is a temptation to leapfrog over CETA in order to attack the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, for example. But the agreements are dangerous for all the same reasons: the TPP and CETA threaten our Internet freedom, pharmaceutical policy and access to medicines, Canada’s working supply management systems for dairy and poultry, our liquor boards and public services.

Rumours of a TPP negotiating round happening in Canada at some point this July have created immediate excitement, and like any major economic gathering of world leaders there is already a call to mobilize community resistance. The TPPxBorder network of Canadian, Mexican and U.S. trade activists has declared May 11, the first day of the next TPP negotiating round in Peru, as a day of action on the TPP. It’s a chance for communities across the continent to come together locally to plan TPP resistance leading up to the July round. This year could also see a Canada-EU summit where Prime Minister Harper will want to sign CETA, and there will probably be a U.S.-EU negotiating round or two in the United States.

This year has also seen the coming together of communities against the Canada-China Foreign Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement. The FIPA was a lightning rod for criticism of the anti-democratic and secretive Harper trade agenda in late 2012. People across the political spectrum asked why the government would invite multi-million – or even multi-billion – dollar lawsuits against environmental or public health measures that get in the way of energy and mining projects by China-based corporations.

Many people are supporting a Hupa-casath First Nation injunction against the FIPA – aimed at stopping the ratification of the dangerous investment treaty – until there has been a thorough consultation with First Nations on the Indigenous treaty rights and constitutional impacts of the deal. All of us gain from this court case, which will put the globally controversial investor-state dispute settlement process under the microscope.

In a very positive way, then, 2013 presents trade justice activists around the world with a common cause we haven’t seen since we fought back the WTO in the Battle for Seattle in 1999. Even the players are the same – rich countries such as Canada, the U.S., the E.U., Australia and New Zealand are pushing their myopic vision for global trade onto the rest of the world – only now outside the WTO, and in bilateral and multilateral trade and investment negotiations with names like CETA, TTIP and TPP.

Our fight may look more complicated with so many acronyms, but when you think about it, it’s never been simpler. Free trade doesn’t work, no matter where it happens. It’s time to unite across Canada and across borders against all “next generation” or 21st century corporate rights pacts.

To learn more about CETA, the TPP, Foreign Investment Protection Agreements (FIPAs), and more, visit www.canadians.org/trade.

Stuart Trew is the Trade Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
In recent omnibus budget legislation, the Harper government cut funding to the Experimental Lakes Area, closing it permanently on March 31, 2013. In this op-ed, which originally appeared in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow and David Schindler, professor of ecology at the University of Alberta and founding director of the Experimental Lakes Area, question the government’s decision and sound the alarm about increased threats to Canada’s water. The Council of Canadians has been part of the fight to save the ELA and continues to speak out to protect our fresh water.

The Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) is an internationally renowned freshwater research centre that has been studying what makes water sick and what makes it well for more than four decades.

Located on dozens of freshwater lakes in a remote area of northern Ontario, the ELA has conducted groundbreaking work on acid rain, algal blooms, climate change and mercury contamination.

Scientists and governments around the world have recognized and used its findings in their research and policy making. The ELA has given Canada a stellar reputation in freshwater research, and closing it would be like France closing the Louvre.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s Conservative government claims this move is part of a cost-cutting exercise. Yet Fisheries and Oceans has run the ELA for a mere $2 million a year, a tiny amount compared to the $30 million spent by the government to propagandize the War of 1812.

The far more likely reason for closing the ELA is that it was conducting research into the effects on freshwater of endocrine disrupters, mercury and other byproducts of extractive industries the government promotes, and its findings were beginning to show serious, but preventable, damage to Canada’s freshwater heritage.

The ELA is just one battle in the Conservative government’s war on aquatic and environmental science. It is also killing the Global Environmental Monitoring System, an inexpensive project that monitors more than 3,000 freshwater sites around the world for a UN database Canada has proudly hosted for decades. The Harper government is systematically dismantling almost every law, regulation, program or research facility aimed at protecting freshwater in Canada and around the world.

The government gutted the Fisheries Act, the most powerful tool Canada had to protect water. The new law no longer protects habitat and is limited to “serious harm” to fish that have commercial, recreational or aboriginal purposes. It killed the Navigable Waters Protection Act, stripping protections from 99 per cent of lakes and rivers in Canada.

Major pipelines and interprovincial power lines now have the green light to cross over and under more than 31,000 lakes and 2.25 million rivers without federal scrutiny.

To hasten energy exploration and development, the government repealed the existing Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and replaced it with a weaker version that will give final decision-making over a project to cabinet, regardless of what the assessment panel recommends. Under the new rules, 3,000 environmental assessments are now cancelled. Many involve Canada’s waterways.

The Harper government has singularly targeted independent science and scientists, shutting down dozens of research projects and facilities conducting basic scientific research on water.

Of paramount concern for basic science is the elimination of the grants programs administered by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, which funded operations at experimental research facilities.

Gone, too, are the 24-year-old national roundtable on the environment and economy, an independent source of expert advice, the National Science Adviser, and funding for the 34-year-old Canadian Environmental Network that acted as a link between 640 small environmental groups and Ottawa.

Governments and communities around the world are moving to protect their precious water systems to ensure they will be here for future generations. What a travesty that Harper has decided to sacrifice our freshwater heritage to please his industry friends. We will all live to regret this.

Update: The Ontario government announced in late April it will provide funding to keep the ELA open. We would like to thank everyone who kept up the public pressure and participated in our urgent “48 Hours to Save the ELA” action alert. Nearly 4,000 Council members sent messages to Ontario Premier Wynne and Manitoba Premier Selinger calling on them to save the ELA – and it worked!
Chapter Contacts

The Council of Canadians appreciates the energy and dedication of our chapter activists. If you are interested in joining a chapter please see the contacts list below, or get in touch with the regional office closest to you. For more information on the Council’s chapters, visit www.canadians.org or call us at 1-800-387-7177.

**Atlantic**

Organizing Office
211-2099 Gottingen St.
Halifax NS B3K 3B2
1-800-472-7811

Regional Organizer
Angela Giles
agiles@canadians.org

Organizing Assistant
Ah Siva Sivakumar
ahsiva@cogeco.ca

**New Brunswick**

Fredericton, NB NEW!
Jean-Louis Deveau
506-459-2907
jlpdev@nbnet.nb.ca

Saint John, NB
Letitia Adair
506-633-0398
ladiar@nb.aol.com

**Newfoundland and Labrador**

St. John’s, NL
Bill Kavanagh
709-864-7943
billkavanagh@Council
Canadians@gmail.com

**Nova Scotia**

Halifax, NS
Jenny Mackinlay
902-454-5566
gmackinlay@eastlink.ca

Inverness County, NS
Johanna Padlett
902-787-2753
coc.inverness@gmail.com

North Shore, NS
Berta Gaulke
902-899-4220
nsnscoc@gmail.com

South Shore, NS
Marion Moore
902-527-1929
southshorescoc@gmail.com

**Prince Edward Island**

Charlottetown, PEI
Leo Brokerid
902-894-4874
lbd45@eastlink.ca

**Ontario**

Regional Organizer
Mark Calzavara
mcalzavara@canadians.org

Organizing Assistant
Allish Morgan
amorgan@canadians.org

Ontario

Brant, ON NEW!
Contact regional office

Brockville, ON
Maureen Wharton
613-345-7502
mwharton45@hotmail.com

Grey-Bruce/Owen Sound, ON
David Walton
519-794-3159
trewmalt@eversus.ca

Guelph, ON
Norah Chaloner
519-823-9601
nrchaloner@hotmail.com

London, ON
Rod Morley
519-434-1895
LondonChapter2012COC@yaho.ca

Hamilton, ON
Kathie Clark
905-648-5336
kclark@interlynx.net

Niagara South (Welland), ON
Fiona McMurrin
905-788-0756
fmcmurrin@cogeco.ca

Northumberland, ON
Elma Parker
905-372-9143
elmapar@eagle.ca

Ottawa, ON
Phil Souliere
613-204-1459
ottawa.coc@gmail.com
https://sites.google.com/site/ottawacanadians/

Peel Region, ON
Rosemary Keenan
905-457-9513
pmkeenan@gmail.com

Peterborough-Kawartha, ON
Roy Brady
705-745-2446
rbrady1@cogeco.ca
www.peterboroughkawarths.org

Simcoe Region, ON
Marianne Else
simcoeregionchapter@live.ca

Thunder Bay, ON NEW!
Shannon Dodd Smith
807-344-4253
tbayoc@gmail.com
http://tbayoc.wordpress.com/

Toronto, ON
Tracy Frohlick
416-975-3895
torontochapter@gmail.com

Windsor-Essex, ON
Doug Hayes
519-735-8319
dhayes18@cogeco.ca

York University, ON
Amit Praharaj
647-448-7732
amitpraharaj@gmail.com

**Quebec**

Montreal, QC
Abdul Pirani
450-371-2529
apirani.coc.montreal@gmail.com

Canadian chapters-montreal.org

Prairies and NT

3rd floor, 10512–122nd Street
Edmonton AB T5N 1M6
780-429-4500
1-877-729-4500

Regional Organizer
Scott Harris
sharris@canadians.org

Organizing Assistant
Aleigh Loney
aloney@canadians.org

**Alberta**

Calgary, AB
Mel Teegtmeyer
403-295-8123
melter@telus.net

www.calgarycouncil.wordpress.com

Edmonton, AB
Richard Merr
780-430-0608
edmontoncouncil@yaho.ca

Hinton, AB
Tim Shain
780-865-1240
cochintonchapters@gmail.com

www.cochintonchapters.ca

**British Columbia**

Yukon

Pearce, BC
John Dressler
250-382-2015

**Vancouver**

Burnaby, BC
Penny Tilby
604-263-1005
tilbypeterson@telus.net

**Surrey**

Langley-White Rock, BC
Anne Laing
256-992-3624
alaineq@nsnbc.ca

**Victoria**

Chad Cramond
250-483-5454
info@vicariaticouncilofcanadians.ca

**Whistler**

BC
Pina Belgerio
604-932-1969
pbelgerio@gmail.com

www.whistlerwatch.org

**Williams Lake**

BC
John Dressler
250-392-9580

**Yellowknife**

BC
Sarah Newton
867-335-0813

sarah.ashley.n@gmail.com

**Northwest Territories**

Yellowknife, NT
Jim Elliott
306-352-4803

Kelowna, BC
Karin Abramsen
306-323-4901

Elaine Hughes
306-344-0058
dychb@cogoco.ca

**British Columbia**

Campbell River, BC
Richard Hagensen
250-286-3019
surf dyst@telus.net

Coquihalla, BC
Chris Snyder
250-347-6395

Chrisnryder21@gmail.com

**Comox Valley, BC**

Kathie Woodley
250-334-4608
cvcouncil@canadians.org

**New Westminster, BC**

Andrew Murray
604-521-3443
alm@telus.net

**Port Alberni, BC**

Colin M. Frazer
250-723-9621
coc.pt.alberni@telus.net

**Powell River, BC**

Patricia Cockedge
604-485-5409
pcosedge@shaw.ca

**Quesnel, BC**

Anne Laing
250-992-3624
alaineq@nsnbc.ca

**Surrey-Langley-White Rock, BC**

Penny Tilby
604-263-1005
tilbypeterson@telus.net

www.vancouvercouncilofcanadians.ca

**Victoria, BC**

Bharat Chandramouli
250-483-5454
info@vicariaticouncilofcanadians.ca

www.vicariaticouncilofcanadians.ca

**Whistler, BC**

Pina Belgerio
604-932-1969
pbelgerio@gmail.com

www.whistlerwatch.org

**Williams Lake, BC**

John Dressler
250-392-9580

**Whistler Watch**

BC
Sarah Newton
867-335-0813

sarah.ashley.n@gmail.com

**Yukon**

Whitehorse, YK
Sarah Newton
867-335-0813

sarah.ashley.n@gmail.com

**New Westminster, BC**

Andrew Murray
604-521-3443
alm@telus.net

**Port Alberni, BC**

Colin M. Frazer
250-723-9621
coc.pt.alberni@telus.net

**Powell River, BC**

Patricia Cockedge
604-485-5409
pcosedge@shaw.ca

**Quesnel, BC**

Anne Laing
250-992-3624
alaineq@nsnbc.ca

**Surrey-Langley-White Rock, BC**

Penny Tilby
604-263-1005
tilbypeterson@telus.net

www.vancouvercouncilofcanadians.ca

**Victoria, BC**

Bharat Chandramouli
250-483-5454
info@vicariaticouncilofcanadians.ca

www.vicariaticouncilofcanadians.ca

**Whistler, BC**

Pina Belgerio
604-932-1969
pbelgerio@gmail.com

www.whistlerwatch.org

**Williams Lake, BC**

John Dressler
250-392-9580

**Whistler Watch**

BC
Sarah Newton
867-335-0813

sarah.ashley.n@gmail.com

**Yukon**

Whitehorse, YK
Sarah Newton
867-335-0813

sarah.ashley.n@gmail.com

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Add your voice for stronger public health care!

Time is running out to get provincial and territorial premiers and the federal government to negotiate a 2014 Health Accord that strengthens and expands medicare. Premiers will be meeting in July in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario to work on the accord. It will be our last chance to push for improvements in the deal.

We need your help to send premiers a message to strengthen and expand universal health care.

Personal stories are the most compelling way to get the conversation started. Send us a video telling us about your experiences with public health care. We’ll share them in Niagara-on-the-Lake when we are there to support better public health care for everyone.

Pull out your video camera, start up your webcam, ask your neighbour (and their kids!) to share a health care story. Then upload it to the Council’s youtube channel at www.youtube/user/CouncilofCanadians.

By bringing our voices together we can let premiers know that health care isn’t just about numbers – it’s about people!

Visit www.canadians.org/healthcare for more information.

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The Council of Canadians
700-170 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5

For more information:
1-800-387-7177 www.canadians.org