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!

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