SINKING THE HARPER AGENDA

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The Council of Canadians believes that political literacy is crucial to regaining control of our communities and our country. We encourage you to copy articles from Canadian Perspectives – most conveniently fit on one or two pages. If you would like to reprint articles, or if you would like to distribute Canadian Perspectives in your community, please contact us at 1-800-387-7177.
Dear friends,

This fall brings us many challenges. Perhaps the most serious is the systematic attack on so many of our cherished institutions in Canada by the Harper government. Attacks on public servants and public services such as health care and pensions; the gutting of environmental laws and safety nets; an aggressive trade agenda determined to remove many of the remaining tools of local government to promote local jobs and economic programs; tying foreign aid to the advancement of Canadian mining interests in the Global South; plans to make Canada a petro state dependent on exported dirty oil; the attack on the human rights of refugees and immigrants – these and so many other developments keep me awake at night.

While the Council of Canadians has always been proudly non-partisan, we have always reserved the right to be critical of the actions of governments of any political stripe if we think they do not serve the best interests of Canadians. To this end, we are working with many other organizations – labour, human rights, environment, anti-poverty, First Nations, arts and culture, immigrants and refugees, and others – to form a network to challenge the Harper agenda. We will offer an alternative vision for Canada based on the values of inclusion, economic justice, universal social rights and environmental stewardship: values we believe are shared by the vast majority of Canadians. This is a crucial time in our country’s history and the Council of Canadians will rise to the challenge.

Part of this challenge is, of course, the court case about possible election fraud we are supporting. Nine brave people from seven ridings across the country have asked to have the election results in their ridings overturned due to the phony calls they and others received giving them false polling station information. The Council of Canadians is proud to support these courageous applicants and we look forward to being in court with them in December.

I am excited about our “No Pipelines, No Tankers” tour of British Columbia in October, where I will be joined by 350.org’s wonderful Bill McKibben, as well as distinguished First Nations and community activists opposed to the export of Alberta’s dirty oil through B.C.’s beautiful terrain and fragile coastal waters. Bill, Canadian writer Linda McQuaig and B.C. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and I will all be in Nanaimo, B.C., to celebrate our 27th Annual General Meeting and conference: Making Waves, Sinking the Harper Agenda. I hope you will be there too!

On a personal note, I will be travelling frequently through the fall and winter. In September, I visited Switzerland at the invitation of the Swiss Council of Churches and several universities to speak about the human right to water and expose the negative role that Nestlé, a huge bottled water corporation based in that country, is playing in commodifying the world’s water. In early October I was in Indianapolis for a historic summit on the future of the Great Lakes where I had the opportunity to present our proposal that the Lakes be protected as a public trust.

In November, I will travel to Mexico as part of an international tribunal to hear evidence of the damage that will be done to the community of Temacapulin and several others if the construction of the Zapotillo Dam is allowed to proceed. I know this will be a deeply moving experience and I will come away, as always, in awe of the spirit and courage of the local people I meet.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your support of the Council and for your commitment to a better Canada and world. We simply could not do our work without you and I am truly grateful every day.

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.
WE ARE SO PROUD TO SUPPORT
We have never been more proud to be Council members than during the valiant effort to stop the Conservative attempts to interfere with democracy. We are convinced, thanks to living in a country that seems to have given birth to Harper-style right wing thinking, that what the Tories did in the last election is just the first step—unless heroes like you and the Council take up the barricades in resistance.

That’s why we upped our initial basic support of the Democracy 24-7 campaign to $247. We both had relatives who went to war to save democracy 70 years ago. One of Florence’s uncles didn’t come home, losing his life aboard an RAF Lancaster. Compared to those kinds of sacrifices, our financial contribution is insignificant. But, it is what we can do.

Please keep up the good work, and please pass along our thanks to all of the staff and others who are involved. You are fighting a battle every bit as important as the ones fought in Europe and Asia by our parents’ generation. Without truly free elections, our nation cannot survive.

Steve and Florence Krueger
Auburn, Washington, U.S.

PIPPINES DO SPILL
After any oil spill, whether small or large, the first reply from the oil companies is “the operation is under control,” even if history has proven otherwise consistently.

In these instances I presume they are referring to human beings—no lives are in danger, so all is well. But what about other forms of life? What about nature?

Complacency allows more pipelines to be constructed even though we know that any molecular structure is bound to fail sooner or later when it is under such extreme pressure to get product through. As they say about gun ownership, it is not “if” an accident will happen, it’s “when.”

That is why we must resist the construction of the Northern Gateway Pipeline at all costs. Any spill in that pristine territory would be a total disaster for all time.

Jean Sloan
Lloydminster, SK

PIPPINES THREATEN WATER
I noticed in the Municipal Groundwater Protection plan for my community’s water resources that people need to be aware of hazardous wastes. Among other compounds that can negatively impact groundwater quality, hazardous wastes include products that are “ignitable, toxic, corrosive or explosive.” It made me wonder what responsibilities corporate land-users have to protect the integrity of our community waters?

The Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline passes right through the municipality of Chilliwack’s Protected Groundwater Zone. In fact, this pipeline was installed through my neighbourhood, where there are now three well pump stations bringing aquifer water up from below ground in close proximity to Kinder Morgan’s 60 year-old pipeline. I would expect that diluted bitumen already being shipped through this old pipeline from the Alberta tar sands contains a large amount of toxic material that could pollute the nearby soil and water resources through seepage, leaks, spills or ruptures.

At this point in time I am unaware of any “fire wall protection” between our underwater well and aquifers and the adjacent subsurface old pipeline carrying toxic tar sands bitumen through from Rosedale to Yarrow and beyond and all the waterways therein.

Wendy Major
Chilliwack, B.C.

THE ECONOMY OR NATUORE?
I am an environmentalist who has a leaning towards socialism. Nature is a reality of which we are all a part. We cannot exist without it. The economy, on the other hand, is man-made. People have gotten by in good and bad economies, but none of us can exist without nature.

What is most important is that everybody gets a “piece of the pie,” not just the rich and powerful. I think more than 60 per cent of Canadians would accept a reasonable drop in material wealth for a cleaner, safer environment and a better future.

Colin Skinner
New Glasgow, N.S.

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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ATTENTION: Editor, Canadian Perspectives
The Council of Canadians believes that democracy is a 24/7 pursuit. Turns out it’s also a 365-days-a-year commitment.

When the Council first invited Canadians to share their experiences of electoral dirty tricks (that, from most accounts, came in the form of misleading phone calls directing voters to non-existent polling stations) and to learn about their legal rights, we had no idea that more than six months later we’d still be knee-deep in a court case of such fundamental importance to our democracy.

That the case is both critical and unprecedented is, in part, why it’s taking this long. The full hearing is scheduled for December 10-14, with a verdict not expected until at least February, despite the court’s requirement for it to be “dealt with without delay.”

The other more frustrating reason for the protracted legal battle is that the Conservative MPs in the seven ridings at issue keep putting up roadblocks at every possible opportunity.

“The Conservatives claim that they want to get to the bottom of the so-called robocalls affair,” said Garry Neil, the Council of Canadians Executive Director, “but they seem to be doing whatever they can to prevent this case from being heard by a judge.”

Delay tactics began with a motion to dismiss on the grounds that the applications brought forward by nine individual electors were “frivolous and vexatious.” The court disagreed, dismissing the motion and awarding $8,000 of costs to the applicants.

“Far from being frivolous or vexatious, or an obvious abuse, the applications raise serious issues about the integrity of the democratic process in Canada and identify practices that if proven, point...
to a campaign of activities that would seek to deny eligible voters their right to vote and/or manipulate or interfere with that right being exercised freely – all of which if permitted to escape even the prospect of judicial scrutiny, could shake public confidence and trust in the electoral process and in those who in good faith stand for public office,” wrote the court official in her ruling.

The ruling on this preliminary motion was a victory we celebrated, but it also set the case back almost two months. And it was only the first of many hurdles.

Next came another motion to dismiss as lawyers for the MPs cited the archaic legal doctrine of “champerty and maintenance,” claiming that, because the Council of Canadians was supporting the individual applicants by paying their legal costs, the organization was improperly interfering with the case.

As evidence, the Conservative MPs filed a vicious 700-page attack against Maude Barlow and other Council board members. Among other things, they accuse the Council of “stirring up strife” and “wanton and officious intermeddling.”

But as the General Counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association explains in her affidavit: “Third party support plays an integral role in the constitutional, administrative and public law adjudication process in Canadian law. . . . It is legitimate for an organization to assist in a legal action that engages issues in which it has an interest, that is in the public interest to resolve, or that seeks to ensure constitutional compliance.”

Ironically, the legal precedent for third party support in public interest litigation comes from a case sponsored by the National Citizens’ Coalition, an organization once headed by Stephen Harper. In order to avoid yet another delay, this motion to dismiss will be heard at the full hearing in December.

Then, there was a simple request from the applicants asking Elections Canada to submit some basic information about its investigations into complaints. The “we-want-to-get-to-the-bottom-of-this” Conservatives wouldn’t object to that, would they?

“Conservative lawyer says too late for new evidence in robocalls court case,” declared one of many news headlines.

In a letter on behalf of the applicants, their lawyer responded: “Surely the Respondent MPs are not suggesting that relevant evidence be withheld from the Court.” Elections Canada subsequently released some of the requested information, though its investigations still remain shrouded in secrecy.

The Conservative MPs had yet another trick up their sleeves. While their delay tactics are already responsible for driving up costs, they have also demanded that the individual applicants provide financial security in the unlikely event that the applicants both lose the case and are forced to pay the Conservative MPs’ legal bills.

How much security? About $250,000 for the seven applications – an enormous sum for the Council (whose support they argued was inappropriate!) – and an impossible amount of money for nine ordinary people.

At the time Canadian Perspectives went to press a decision on this motion had not yet been made.

“Every time we clear one obstacle, it seems that two more pop up,” said Neil. “But we won’t waver in our commitment to see this through on behalf of all Canadians who care about our democracy.”

Democracy truly is a 24/7, 365-days-a-year pursuit.

Elizabeth Berman is the Communications Manager for the Council of Canadians.

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**June 2012** The first court hearing takes place on the Conservative Party MPs’ motion to dismiss the legal applications on the basis they are “frivolous and vexatious.” During the hearing, a Conservative Party lawyer tells the court that “voter suppression is as old as the hills.”

**July 2012** The motion to dismiss the applications is denied. A second motion put forward by the Conservative Party MPs on the archaic legal doctrine of “champerty and maintenance,” which alleges the Council of Canadians has no legal basis to support the applications, is held for a later hearing. The motion is accompanied by a 700-page attack against the Council, its board members and Chairperson Maude Barlow.

**August 2012** Lawyers for the Conservative MPs file affidavits from political campaign managers denying claims of election fraud, and from an executive with RMG who counters Desgagné’s affidavit.

**September 2012** Legal proceedings continue as witnesses are cross-examined.

**December 10, 2012** Federal Court hearings on the nine legal applications of widespread voter fraud get underway.

**August 2012** Lawyers for the Conservative Party MPs file a motion asking the court to require financial securities from the applicants in the amount of $250,000.
Nine Canadians Lead Unprecedented Fight Against Election Fraud

When Leeanne Bielli’s phone rang last spring, she never expected it would be Elections Canada calling.

More surprising, it was a robocall informing her of a last-minute change to the location of her Don Valley East polling station for the 2011 federal election. Leeanne scrambled for pen and paper to jot down the new address, but it was too late. The message ended as abruptly as it started.

Having no reason to question the authenticity of a call from Elections Canada, she believed that without the new address she would not be able to cast her ballot. As a direct result, Leeanne did not vote in the 2011 federal election. It would be almost a year before she learned the truth – she had been the victim of electoral fraud.

Three hundred kilometres north, in the Ontario riding of Nipissing-Timiskaming, Peggy Walsh-Craig received a similar call last spring, also purportedly from Elections Canada. “I remember quite clearly [the automated message] said that due to higher than expected voter turnout, my polling station had been changed.” It also reminded her of another call she received earlier in the election campaign, during which she was asked to indicate whether she planned to vote Conservative. Peggy said she would not.

In the same riding, Ken Ferance also experienced a pattern of similar calls – as did Sandra McEwing, Bill Kerr and Jeff Reid in Winnipeg, Kay Burkhart in Saskatoon, Yvonne Kafka on Vancouver Island, and Thomas Parlee in Whitehorse.

Not until after news of the so-called robocall scandal broke this spring did these nine people, along with the rest of us, learn the calls were fraudulent. Moreover, they were likely part of a widespread, organized and targeted campaign of voter suppression and election fraud that may have affected thousands of voters – and the outcomes in ridings across the country.

Put yourself in Leeanne’s shoes for a moment. Imagine realizing that you had been intentionally tricked out of your right to vote. Now imagine it was your mother or father’s phone that rang last spring.

For these nine Canadians, such a blatant violation of the most fundamental democratic right could not go unchallenged. This March, they each decided to step forward and launch a legal application to overturn the results in their riding. As Peggy Walsh-Craig says of her decision, “I am someone who takes my civic responsibility very seriously.”

Even by retaining lawyers willing to take on the litigation on a partial pro bono basis, the group could not afford to pay the significant legal costs on their own. So from the beginning, the Council of Canadians committed to paying their costs. Promoting and defending democratic rights has been central to our organization’s mandate for more than 27 years. And while our annual budget was already fully committed, this crucial issue demanded the Council’s support.

We established the Democracy 24-7 Legal Fund to enlist the public’s help with donations to offset their mounting legal costs. And the response so far has been tremendous. Thanks to generous contributions from people across the country, sufficient funds were raised to see the applications through numerous hurdles and preliminary motions.

However, relentless litigation from Conservative Party lawyers through the spring and summer has driven legal costs well above what was anticipated. As a result, legal costs have now outstripped donations.

Today, these landmark legal cases are at a critical stage. With legal proceedings still underway and the Federal Court hearings set to begin in December, a new influx of donations is urgently needed to refill the Fund’s coffers.

Now is the time for us all to renew our support and show these nine determined Canadians that they are not in this alone. Leeanne, Peggy, Ken, Sandra, Bill, Jeff, Kay, Yvonne and Thomas are leading an unprecedented fight to restore voters’ rights with courage and resolve. And their fight is our collective fight.

Nothing short of public faith in our electoral system and the integrity of Canada’s democracy lies in the balance.
Making Waves and Sinking the Harper Agenda

The Council of Canadians rejects the Harper agenda.

It is an agenda driven by an ideology that is not shared by the vast majority of Canadians. People from coast to coast to coast see that the Harper government is systematically eroding and endangering the environment, human rights and the economy of this country. At this time of relentless attacks on democracy in Canada – attacks on workers and unions, immigrants, the environment, public services, and even on our fundamental democratic right to vote – a broad civil society movement is needed more than ever to counter this government of the 1%.

Civil Society Summit
On September 13, we convened a civil society summit of more than 50 organizations to find ways to collaborate to oppose the Harper agenda and to offer an alternative vision for Canada based on the principles of inclusion, economic justice, universal social rights and environmental stewardship.

We intend to follow up on this summit with the creation of a new network inspired by the success of the Occupy movement, the massive demonstrations in Quebec, and the vitality of Canada’s social and labour movements. This new network will encourage significant organizing and resistance in local communities.

We are also considering a major civil society summit for the fall of 2013, when we would further define our vision for this country and consider the next steps needed to implement it.

Nanaimo Conference
On October 26-27 in Nanaimo, British Columbia, we will be holding a movement-building conference with environmental, health, youth, Indigenous and labour groups and others to fight back against Harper’s austerity agenda, and the mining and pipeline projects that threaten our environment.

With growing concerns about unsustainable mining, water-threatening fracking, and bitumen and natural gas export pipelines in B.C., our conference will come at a pivotal time for Council of Canadians members and chapter activists.

A Peoples’ Social Forum
In addition, on November 3-4, we expect that a Peoples’ Social Forum will be launched. This social forum, which will likely take place one year prior to the October 2015 federal election, will be another major opportunity for groups across the country to collaborate and identify a compelling and credible alternative vision to the Harper government’s current agenda. It will also help mobilize people to challenge the federal government, much like the student movement in Quebec challenged the Charest government and succeeded in ending tuition hikes and the repressive Bill 78.

Ongoing campaigning
We will also tackle key planks of the Harper agenda through our campaigns. While it is recognized that the Harper government will not listen to public opinion, it cannot implement its agenda on its own, which gives us key pressure points.

We can chip away at the Harper agenda by:

• Derailing the Canada–European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) by focusing on growing municipal and provincial opposition, as well as the serious concerns about the deal within the European Parliament. (The trade pact needs provincial support and will be voted on in the European Parliament.)

• Stopping the Northern Gateway, Trans Mountain and Pacific Trails pipelines by helping to mobilize public opposition, working in solidarity with First Nations opposed to these pipelines (who can delay them with legal challenges), and solidifying opposition within the next provincial government in British Columbia.

• Countering Harper’s 10-year Health Accord, which would cut billions from the provinces for public health care, by convincing the premiers to take action on their consensus to implement an interprovincial “pharmacare” program on selected drugs, as well as by pushing them to reject the provision in CETA that would extend the patents on pharmaceutical drugs and add billions to the costs of provincial health care budgets.

• Challenging the Harper government’s economic strategy of promoting destructive mining practices throughout Latin America by working with our allies in Mexico, El Salvador, Chile and other countries to ensure that local, Indigenous and governmental opposition there does not allow these water-destroying projects to proceed.

• Mobilizing against the gutting of the Fisheries Act, the abandonment of the Great Lakes and lakes across the country, and water-destroying fracking projects by working with communities and First Nations and simply not allowing specific projects (like the dumping of mine waste into Fish Lake in British Columbia) to proceed.

Please join us in this historic effort. For daily updates about how we are working to sink the Harper agenda, please see www.canadians.org/blog.

Brent Patterson is the Political Director of the Council of Canadians.

by Brent Patterson

The Council of Canadians | www.canadians.org
Process to **Replace** Canadian Environmental Assessment Act Is a Threat to **Water**, the **Environment** and **Democracy**

Profound changes to the way Canada does environmental assessments are being put in place, significantly reducing federal government oversight of new energy projects.

The sweeping changes come as part of the federal government’s omnibus budget bill, which received the Senate’s stamp of approval this past June.

Bill C-38 hands over environmental oversight for many massive oil, gas, wind farm and dam projects to the provinces and reduces the number of federal review organizations and departments from more than 40 to 3.

The Bill amends close to 70 different pieces of legislation without public scrutiny. It guts the Fisheries Act and replaces the former Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) with one that significantly reduces the number and scope of environmental assessments done in Canada. It also severely limits public participation in assessments involving review panels and puts limits on the length of time reviews can take to be completed.

Many groups – including the Council of Canadians – and thousands of people across Canada were outraged at this undemocratic move and warned of its serious environmental implications. Groups, including the Sierra Club, Mining Watch, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Ecojustice, and prominent Canadians such as David Suzuki, publicly decried the changes. The Council of Canadians also joined the “Black Out, Speak Out” campaign, where websites went dark for a day to bring attention to the silencing of groups and voices that speak out for the protection of our natural environment.

As the fallout of the new CEAA continues, environmental groups have been grappling with how to respond to the federal government’s “consultation” process on the changes.

“**Consultation**” process hollow exercise

Late August marked the end of the very short timeframe within which select groups could submit comments on how decisions will be made about which projects receive federal environmental assessments. Under the new regulations, there are many ways industry will be able to bypass federal reviews.

Although the invitation for feedback on the new assessment criteria was called a “consultation” process, there was no information on the websites for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, or even in the Canada Gazette about this process. An inquiry to the CEAA confirmed that the information was not on any website and that this was not a “public consultation” per se, but rather a “stakeholder consultation.” Only select organizations were sent a letter requesting feedback. An officer at the Agency stated that this is how other...
organizations would learn about the “consultation” process. The letters arrived in the middle of summer and gave less than three weeks’ notice for a related information session, and less than two months to provide feedback on the new criteria.

In reply, the Council of Canadians called on the federal government to scrap this bogus process and begin genuine public consultation. We, like many groups concerned with environmental issues, believe these changes are significant and will have a profound impact on our water and environment and should be open for public debate.

**Complete overhaul of the CEAA**

The new act provides a complete overhaul of the former CEAA. These changes were explicitly made to make it easier for industry to pass (or even bypass) the federal environmental approval process. While many (but not all) projects will still be subject to provincial review, provincial assessments are often narrower in scope and more limiting of public consultation.

**Abandon projects that need assessments**

As noted by the Sierra Club, the former “trigger-based approach” to determine whether a CEAA review is required is being replaced with a project list approach. The federal Minister of Environment will also have the power to require a CEAA assessment for non-listed projects.

This list approach would exempt projects that could have serious environmental implications. In late August, *Post Media News* reported that 3,000 screenings of proposed development projects across Canada that could damage the environment, including hundreds involving a pipeline or fossil fuel energy, will be cancelled as a result of the changes to the CEAA. The new CEAA would exempt nearly 500 projects from a federal environmental assessment in British Columbia alone. According to the *Vancouver Sun*, these projects include wind farms, bridge constructions and run-of-river projects, among others.

In Ontario, one example would be Bruce Power’s proposal to ship radioactive nuclear waste across the Great Lakes. In August, Sierra Club Canada and the Canadian Environmental Law Association announced that they were withdrawing their applications for judicial review of permits that allowed Bruce Power to ship these radioactive materials through Canadian waters to Sweden. Under the new CEAA regulations, Bruce Power’s plan would not trigger an environmental assessment as it should have under the old act.

**Shut out public participation**

The opportunity for public participation in panel reviews has been changed significantly under the new CEAA. As noted by the Library of Parliament, “while the public at large will still be permitted to submit written comments regarding a project, only ‘interested parties’ will be permitted to participate at hearings. This will, essentially, restrict participation at hearings to those types of parties who currently participate as intervenors, while eliminating the right that currently exists for members of the public (broadly speaking) to make 10-minute oral statements to voice their concerns. Similarly, for pipelines, only ‘interested parties’ will be given an opportunity to participate in the assessment.”

“Interested parties” are defined as persons who are either “directly affected by the carrying out of the project” or have “relevant information or expertise.” Rather than inviting members of the public to hearings, the federal government will be able to limit or exclude organizations and individuals at their discretion. This shuts down public debate and shuts out members of surrounding communities, the public, and environmental organizations that want to have a say.

**Restricting scope compromises assessments**

The new CEAA limits the scope of environmental assessments by reducing the factors examined to areas of federal jurisdiction such as fish, aquatic species under the Species at Risk Act, migratory birds, federal lands, Aboriginals, and changes to the environment that are “directly linked or necessarily incidental” to a federal approval. Ecojustice has warned that reducing the number of factors required in assessments compromises the value of any analysis. Ecojustice states that “For the projects that are subject to an environmental assessment, assessing the impacts of a project on renewable resources will no longer be required, even though it is an important indicator of whether we are overtaxing ecosystems. The environmental effects considered will also be limited to matters of federal jurisdiction, such as fish, aquatic species-at-risk, migratory birds, projects on federal lands and effects on Aboriginal people. Overall, the removal of this important factor from environmental assessment under the new Act could severely constrain the ability to evaluate a project from a sustainable development perspective.”

**In our hands**

People in Canada are seeing an unprecedented assault on our water sources, forests, clean air, public health and democracy through budget cuts and legislative changes. Thankfully, we are seeing an equally unprecedented response from people who are willing to take water and environmental protection into their own hands, and who are finding new ways to keep democracy alive in Canada.
The Pacific Trails Pipeline (PTP) has largely stayed under the radar for many people, which is surprising since the pipeline follows much of the same right-of-way as the proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline. It would bring fracked gas from Summit Lake, B.C., to a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Kitimat, B.C., where tankers would need to navigate the geographically precarious waters of the Douglas Channel to bring gas to international markets. This pipeline would threaten sensitive ecosystems, contribute to climate change and, most importantly, contradict local communities’ right to say “no.”

Unis’tot’en resistance
The Unis’tot’en clan of the Wet’suwet’en has repeatedly rejected both oil and gas pipelines being built on their traditional territory where they still hunt, trap and fish. The community has declared their lands “off limits” to contract loggers who want to take down forests along the pipeline route. “Our territories have never been ceded. We have never surrendered anything here. These territories belong to our people and we have no intention of giving it up or surrendering to any entity,” said Hereditary Chief Toghestiy Wet’suwet’en.

The community conducts a free, prior and informed consent protocol to ensure that those who plan to enter the territory do so with respect both for the land and for the people who care for it. The National Energy Board, the province and the federal government undermined the community’s sovereignty when they approved the PTP. The Wet’suwet’en have stated they will not allow the pipelines to be built on their territory and that they will not compromise their traditional laws and sovereignty.

The Wet’suwet’en held their third annual action camp on the territory in August, where more than 150 people gathered in support of the fight against the PTP. In an effort to stop the PTP’s construction, the Wet’suwet’en have built a log cabin on the pipeline route and have another cabin under construction.
Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline

Further south, community groups and coalitions are putting increasing pressure on local politicians to stop plans to expand the current Trans Mountain Pipeline. Owned by Kinder Morgan, the pipeline was built in 1953, and currently transports diluted bitumen (dilbit) from Edmonton, Alberta, to Burnaby, B.C.

The pipeline has already suffered several spills and fractures. It was originally built to carry conventional crude and was not designed to transport dilbit, which is more corrosive.

Kinder Morgan has proposed doubling the pipeline’s capacity to transport more than 750,000 barrels of dilbit per day, which is even more than what is planned for the Northern Gateway Pipeline. For the expansion, the company is proposing to build a secondary pipeline that would either follow the current pipeline route to Burrard Inlet, and another that would carry the crude to Kitimat for export. If approved, this project would bring even more tankers to the Douglas Channel, which is known for its high winds, extreme weather conditions and many islands with shorelines that are difficult to navigate.

Indigenous resistance

The Tsleil-Waututh people, which in English means “People of the Inlet,” are one of the Coast Salish Nations who have been clear that they do not want tar sands projects – pipelines, tankers or refineries – on their territory. From the Nation’s reserve you can see a Chevron refinery, tar sands holding tanks, and the Westridge Marine Terminal. All of these, and other oil and gas infrastructure, already exist on Tsleil-Waututh territory.

Sundance Chief Rueben George of the Tsleil-Waututh spoke about the urgent need to protect the Inlet at a canoe festival this past summer. “We have to say ‘no,’” he stated simply.

Communities on the route say NO!

Communities along the pipeline route have been organizing and creating local groups to oppose the Kinder Morgan expansion as well as any project that would bring tar sands crude to the West Coast. PIPE-UP, based in the Fraser Valley, and BROKE (Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion) have been holding town halls, educating their neighbours, and making headlines in the media.

The PIPE-UP network questioned Ian Anderson, Kinder Morgan Canada’s president, at a Chamber of Commerce event. Group members asked if the project includes any safety upgrades, or changes to safety protocols since dilbit is more dangerous and corrosive than other materials currently transported through the pipeline, a fact that has been proven in numerous reports following a 2010 dilbit spill in the Kalamazoo River. While Anderson would not agree that dilbit is more dangerous, he did confirm that the Trans Mountain Pipeline has not been upgraded for the proposed expanded use, claiming that – after almost 60 years – the pipeline quality “is as good today as it was then.”

Pipeline solidarity

While many communities are organizing locally, they also recognize that these pipelines are part of a larger picture – one that is driven by the profits generated for oil and gas companies. The quest for profits comes at the expense of local communities, whose members will pay the environmental and social costs.

There is a strong link between these pipeline proposals: if the Pacific Trails Pipeline is built, it could pave the way for the Northern Gateway Pipeline, the northern route of the Trans Mountain Pipeline and other pipeline projects. All of the pipelines would increase tanker traffic off of B.C.’s coast and further encourage the expansion of the fossil fuel industry.

In order to achieve true climate justice we must continue to turn off the taps for tar sands crude and say, “no pipelines, no tankers!”

Maryam Adrangi is the Energy and Climate Justice Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
Momentum Building for Fracking Bans

by Emma Lui

Above: Council of Canadians staff members Philippe Charbonneau, Matthew Ramsden and Emma Lui don hazmat suits, masks and safety goggles as they carry buckets of mock toxic fracking fluid to Parliament Hill. The buckets, in fact, held close to 10,000 petitions from Council of Canadians members calling on the federal government to ban fracking.

All across Canada communities are fighting controversial fracking projects that have the potential to contaminate and deplete local water sources, exacerbate climate change and harm public health.

Hydraulic fracturing, more commonly known as “fracking,” is a technique to extract natural gas from harder-to-access unconventional sources trapped in rock formations such as shale gas, coal bed methane and tight gas. Millions of litres of water and thousands of litres of chemicals are injected underground at very high pressure in order to create fractures in the rock, allowing gas to flow up the well.

There are many risks associated with fracking, including groundwater contamination from the toxic chemicals that are injected into the ground, and leaks of contaminated wastewater. The fluid waste from fracking contains toxic and radioactive substances. Fracking projects can also lower groundwater levels and lead to the buildup of methane gas, a highly flammable substance that has been known to accumulate in shallow waters and household pipes near fracking sites.

Despite the risks associated with fracking, some provincial governments have issued permits for gas companies to start fracking projects, or to transport shale gas using the Pacific Trails Pipeline. With governments failing to protect water sources, the environment and public health, communities are taking matters into their own hands.

Blood Reserve, Alberta

Last fall a group of Indigenous women from the Kainai Nation (also known as the Blood Tribe) set up a blockade to stop Murphy Oil from...
fracking on their traditional territory. In 2010, Kainaiwa Resources – a company solely owned by the Kainai Nation – quietly signed a deal with Canadian Bowood Energy and U.S. Murphy Oil that gave the two companies a five-year lease on half of the reserves’ land in exchange for $50 million. According to some members of the community, the Kainai Chief and Council failed to consult with the people about the land lease.

The women, who are a part of the Kainai Earth Watch, partnered with local groups, including the Lethbridge Chapter of the Council of Canadians, to block the companies’ trucks, preventing them from entering the site in order to protect the community’s health, wildlife, livestock, land and water from the harmful impacts of fracking operations. A little more than 24 hours after the blockade was set up, Lois Frank, Elle-Maija Apiniskim Tailfeathers and Jill Crop Eared Wolf were arrested. While the charges were dropped for two of the women in exchange for community service, Frank asserted that she had done nothing wrong and refused to accept a plea deal. The court stayed charges against Frank earlier this year.

Inverness County, Nova Scotia
The Nova Scotia government recently granted a one-year extension on Petroworth’s permit allowing the company to drill an exploration oil well near Lake Ainslie. Community members are concerned that drilling so close to the lake will cause environmental damage and may eventually lead to fracking in the area, further threatening one of the largest natural freshwater lakes in Nova Scotia. The Council of Canadians’ Inverness County Chapter is actively opposing fracking in the county. Following a request by the chapter, the Inverness County Council passed a resolution in support of a province-wide ban on fracking in February 2012. Council has yet to decide on a municipal bylaw that would ban fracking within the county. If passed, it would be the first bylaw of its kind in Canada.

Horn River Formation, British Columbia
The fracking project in the Horn River Formation in north-eastern British Columbia and the North West Territories has been called the “centre of fracking” and “the world’s biggest frac.” The proposed Pacific Trails Pipeline would bring fracked unconventional natural gas extracted from the Horn River Formation to Kitimat port for export. (Read more about this on pages 11 and 12.) The soon-to-be-released documentary Fractured Land tells the story of Caleb Behn, from the Treaty 8 territory in the Horn River Basin area, who visited the Maori people in New Zealand to share stories about community fights against fracking.

Governments say “no” to fracking
The Nova Scotia government recently implemented a de facto moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. In April, the government announced that it was extending its review of hydraulic fracturing to mid-2014, during which time no approvals would be issued. The new Quebec government has stated it intends to ban fracking in the province. There is currently a moratorium in place that prevents fracking exploration.

In mid-May, Vermont became the first American state to ban fracking when Peter Shumlin, Vermont’s governor, signed a bill disallowing it. The Council of Canadians sent letters to the premiers across Canada urging them to follow suit.

International bans
Fracking is most prolific in the United States, with Canada following closely behind. Other countries that have natural gas reserves include China, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Australia. But as awareness continues to grow about the risks fracking poses to water and people, more countries are banning the practice.

In 2011 France became the first country in Europe to ban fracking. Alarmed by the stories of water pollution and documents detailing the toxic chemicals used for fracking in the U.S., communities in France held rallies and posted anti-fracking signs across the country for months to pressure the government to impose a ban.

In January 2012, Bulgaria followed suit when lawmakers overwhelmingly voted to ban fracking across the country, including the Black Sea territorial waters. Before the decision was made, protesters marched to express their opposition to fracking in Dobrudja, Bulgaria’s most fertile farm region, where community members feared that Chevron’s plans to drill would contaminate the water and soil.

In South Africa, communities succeeded in getting the government to implement a moratorium to protect the Karoo region, one of the most remote and beautiful places in the country. The moratorium was to remain in place until the government’s review on fracking was complete. Farmers, environmentalists, scientists, and families gathered recently demanding that the government uphold the moratorium on fracking. Unfortunately, the government lifted the moratorium in September, and the land is now open for drilling.

The state of Victoria in Australia recently joined the growing list of communities to say “no” to fracking. Protesters fear fracking of coal seam gas will threaten not only food and water sources, but also tourism, farming, dairy and wine industries.

We can stop fracking
The global anti-fracking movement is thriving. Nearly 100 organizations from France, Spain, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and other countries around the world signed the statement “For a Future without Fracking!” at the People’s Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, this past June. On September 22, communities across six continents participated in the first-ever “Global Frackdown,” organizing more than 125 events calling for a ban on fracking.

For more information about the Council of Canadians’ campaign to stop fracking, visit our website at www.canadians.org/fracking.
Last year, I travelled to Guatemala to visit the site of Goldcorp’s Marlin Mine, an operation so controversial it is called “the project of death” by the local community. Marlin practises open pit mining, mountaintop removal and cyanide leaching to extract its copper and gold, and uses and destroys 250,000 litres of water every day, contaminating the local water supply and endangering the health of the local Indigenous people.

The company’s actions are so egregious that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has asked the Guatemalan government to suspend operations of the mine, something the government has refused to do.

When I was there, I met Diadora Hernandez, who was shot in the face in front of her five-year-old granddaughter and left for dead after refusing to sell her plot of land to the company. Diadora recovered and is still on her land, but she told me her life is in danger every day.

Diadora, and German Chub, a young man who was paralyzed from the waist down after being shot by thugs who were looking for activists fighting another Canadian mining company, and thousands like them who have been victims of mining-related violence throughout the Americas, have no recourse – not from their police or governments, and certainly not from ours. In Canada, the sole mandate regarding mining is to promote the interests of Canadian mining companies no matter what.

The extractive mineral industry is exploding around the world. Mining Watch reports that every year, mining companies dump 180 million tonnes of toxic mine waste into oceans, lakes and rivers. This is 1.5 times the amount of municipal solid waste the U.S. sends to landfills every year.

The global mining industry is becoming more and more contentious in its relentless search for new solutions, leaving in its wake increasing environmental and human rights abuses.

Seventy-five per cent of the world’s mining companies are headquartered in Canada and they are growing. The industry predicts $130 billion in new investments in the next five years.

With the price of gold at an all time high, the stakes are huge, as are the profits. Barrick Gold, for example, has grown from a company worth $642 million a decade ago to $4.5 billion today.

At the same time, the stage is being set for further power to be granted to the mining industry here in Canada. The Harper government has gutted environmental assessments and the Fisheries Act to the benefit of the energy and mining sector. This is the most anti-environmental government in our history, wiping out decades of protections built by past generations.

The new regime coincides with a massive extractive industries invasion across Canada. In Ontario, it is called the “Ring of Fire,” referring to 5,000 square kilometres of pristine wilderness that will be opened up for $30 billion worth of chromite mining. In Quebec, it is “Plan Nord,” a plan so vast it is expected to bring in $80 billion in investment. Plan Nord would allow forest and mining exploration in 1.2 million square kilometres, equal to 72 per cent of Quebec’s geographic area!

Not to be outdone, the British Columbia government is looking at approvals for more than 60 mining projects, some new, some expanded. These include:

- The Raven Coal Mine on Vancouver Island that would produce 1 million tonnes of highly bituminous coal each year and pose a permanent threat to the local watersheds.
- The Taseko Mine, a huge open pit copper and gold mine near Fish Lake, home to the Tsilhqot’in people that was rejected once by the federal government. The company has come back for another try under Stephen Harper’s new, corporate-friendly environmental rules.

We have come here to expose the practices and profits of an industry out of control and the governments that aid and abet them. We must come together to build a powerful peoples’ network of solidarity and action that will challenge these mining giants and their current immunity from justice.

Those with power never cede it without a fight. Let’s give them one!

This is an excerpt of a speech given by Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, at the Shout Out Against Mining Injustice, which was held in Vancouver, B.C., in June.
Young Activists Are “Next Up” to Lead Social Change

by Scott Harris

A chance encounter with a Council of Canadians’ Regional Organizer at a sparsely attended library event for a then little-known trade deal called the Multilateral Agreement on Investment put Vancouver-based educator Kevin Millsip on the path to becoming a lifelong social justice activist.

More than a decade later, Millsip’s recollection of that night in 1998 – and the opportunities, mentoring and connections that came out of it – inspired him to create an innovative new program aimed at training, supporting and connecting the next generation of social change leaders in Canada.

“I asked myself, ‘What would my journey have been like if I hadn’t met this person?’” Millsip recalls. “That night opened up a lot of doors for me, but what if I hadn’t met him? And I wondered, can we as a movement do something that incorporates moments like that, but is more intentional, and more strategic?”

The answer to those questions emerged in 2007 when Millsip and Seth Klein of the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives launched a new program called “Next Up” in Vancouver. In 2009 they expanded the program to Edmonton, and then to Calgary and Saskatoon the following year. Millsip says he’s also in discussions about expanding Next Up to other regions in the near future.

Next Up is a free, intensive leadership development course for activists aged 18 to 32. Each group of about a dozen young activists meets one night a week for seven months, plus one full-day Saturday per month. They learn activist, organizing and communication skills; host guest speakers; debate issues and hone their political analysis skills; connect with key organizations and community leaders; and undertake hands-on activist projects in collaboration with local activist organizations.

The Council of Canadians has been an active supporter of the program since its inception, and several Next Up graduates have already gone on to become Council chapter activists or staff. Council organizers in B.C. and the Prairies facilitate workshops and Council board members, staff and chapter activists participate on the advisory committees that guide the program in each city.

“The point of Next Up is to really get serious about developing leadership capacity and supporting young leaders; to create a space where if you’re progressively minded, you can go to figure out how social change works,” explains Millsip. “We’re looking 10 or 15 years in the future – like the Conservative movement does – because we need more people who are really thinking strategically; who are thinking both long-term and figuring out how to work together more effectively now.”

And that, says Millsip, is why Next Up is about more than simply offering an intensive training program for activists. It also has a deliberate strategy of building a close network among the program alumni by hosting annual gatherings of past participants and maintaining communication opportunities to foster collaboration.

There are more than 150 graduates who make up this network across Western Canada. Karen Rooney, who graduated from the program’s first group in Saskatoon, is one of them.

“Next Up was really a pivotal experience in my life,” Rooney says. “Prior to the program, I had a lot of knowledge about the issues I care about, but was lacking the knowledge about how to get involved with people working on them. None of my friends or family were activists and Next Up gave me the connections to begin to work with people in Saskatoon on the issues I cared so much about.”

Since Next Up, Rooney has gone on to drive the formation of the Saskatoon Council of Canadians chapter, and was a delegate with the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition at the December 2011 climate change negotiations in Durban, South Africa.

“Prior to Next Up, I thought that only the really amazing people were the ones who participated in a UN climate change negotiation, or who started a chapter of a national organization,” she says. “Since being a participant, I’ve realized that everyone has that capacity and that it’s the people who are passionate about the world around them who need to stand and make their voices heard.”

For more information on the Next Up program, visit www.nextup.ca.

Scott Harris is the Prairies Regional Organizer for the Council of Canadians.
Chapter Action Updates

by Brent Patterson

Council of Canadians chapters are actively challenging the Harper agenda in communities across the country.

CETA RESOLUTIONS

Chapters have been integral in many of the 30-plus municipal resolutions calling for a municipal exemption from the Canada–European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). This is putting real pressure on the Harper government. If municipalities were to be exempt, the Europeans would likely walk away from the proposed trade pact. Ottawa chapter activist Phil Soulière noted in a recent letter to the editor in the Globe and Mail, “The federal government is pursuing a trade deal that targets municipal powers and services without giving a real say to local governments.”

In July, the London chapter organized a protest outside London West Conservative MP Ed Holder’s office, telling journalists present that studies have found that Canadians could face a $2.8 billion increase in drug costs annually under new rights granted by CETA to brand name drug companies.

2014 HEALTH ACCORD

This summer chapters participated in a National Day of Action for a 2014 Health Accord. The protests highlighted the Harper government’s move to cut transfer payments to the provinces for health care by approximately $31 billion over the 10-year period of the accord. Campbell River chapter activist Joanne Banks told local media, “Instead of being at the table and taking a leadership role, the Prime Minister and the federal government are turning their back on health care. This is unacceptable. We expect the government of Canada to come to the table and work with the provinces to build an even stronger public health care system, not a for-profit, privatized system like south of the border.”

Inverness County chapter activist Anne Lévesque highlighted in a letter to the editor the Harper government’s de-funding of health care and how this will fragment health care coverage across the country. She wrote, “We need to remind our federal politicians that Canadians should have the same services and quality of care provided by a national public system. Health care should be based on need, not the ability to pay.”

HEALTH CARE FOR REFUGEES

In June, the Kamloops chapter marched to raise awareness of the Harper government’s cuts to health care services for refugees. Chapter activist Anita Strong told the media, “I don’t think a lot of people in Kamloops know what’s being done in our name.”

SAVING "NO" TO BILL C-38

The Prince Albert chapter protested against the Harper government’s C-38 omnibus budget bill legislation in June. Chapter activist and Council board member Rick Sawa told local media, “We’re here to say we don’t agree with that. We’re here to say we don’t want that kind of Canada.”

The Hamilton chapter also protested Bill C-38 outside Conservative MP David Sweet’s constituency office. “What they are doing is really shutting down Canadian democracy with this omnibus bill,” said Hamilton chapter activist Kathie Clark.

A similar action also took place at Conservative MP Gerald Keddy’s office in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.

BLACK OUT, SPEAK OUT

Also in June, the Guelph, Hamilton, Ottawa, Victoria, Winnipeg and St. John’s chapters joined the Council of Canadians’ national office and numerous other groups across the country in the “Black Out, Speak Out” campaign. By darkening websites and participating in protests that day, the message was sent that the Harper government’s Budget Implementation Act will weaken environmental laws and silence the voices of people who act to defend them. The Telegram newspaper reported, “St. John’s hosted one of five public rallies being held across the country today, aiming to get out the Black Out Speak Out message. . . . Representing both the Council of Canadians and the Sandy Pond Alliance, Ken Kavanagh raised objections to statements made by federal Conservatives, including Prime Minister Stephen Harper. ‘It’s the insidious way . . . in which he is dismissing and insulting and demonizing many of us who are ordinary citizens because we want to speak out and because we don’t agree with him,’ he told the gathering.”

DON’T FRACK WITH OUR WATER

In mid-September, the Charlottetown chapter participated in a “don’t frack with our water” protest in front of the Confederation Centre where provincial and federal energy ministers were gathered for a private dinner. Their messages to the energy ministers were reported on local radio stations, as well as on CBC Radio and CBC TV.

Brent Patterson is the Political Director for the Council of Canadians.
Chapter Activist Profile
Jim Riesberry, Brockville, Ontario

Brockville is a city of 22,000 people on the St. Lawrence River east of Kingston. Jim Riesberry helped launch the local chapter and served as its contact and chairperson for the past eight years. He recently handed off those responsibilities in order to focus on a new chapter campaign. Jim has a lifelong history of working for social justice. He is a retired Anglican clergyman who spent 28 years ministering in Kingston and Cochrane, Ontario.

What drew you to activism and to the Council of Canadians?
I became aware of the have-nots in Canada while studying to be a geologist at the University of Toronto and assisting my brother in his parish in downtown Toronto in the early 1950s. In 1969 my wife Barbara and I linked up with the Ecumenical Institute, a secular order that was trying to reform the church and assist communities to help themselves. Cardinal, Ontario was our first parish area and we created such things as a farmers’ market, Meals on Wheels and a downtown improvement program. We also held numerous all-candidates meetings for federal, provincial and municipal elections. It was a fun time.

Barbara and I continued our social justice work throughout the 1980s. When we came to Brockville in 1998, we met with Bob Panter and formed the Brockville Social Justice Coalition. In 2002 this group became a chapter of the Council of Canadians because we needed a source of information, challenge and leadership.

What has been the most important or inspirational thing you’ve done with the chapter?
Our chapter campaigned extensively to support the Romanow report on the future of public health care. We participated in one of the forums in Ottawa and gathered thousands of signatures on a petition. It was an exciting effort that 30 or 40 people took part in. Over the last 10 years we have presented to city council, participated in demonstrations in Ottawa, met annually with our MP, screened documentaries, and hosted Maude and the Unbottle It! tour, among other things. We don’t get to celebrate as many victories as we would like, but we have the joy of working with others across Canada and together being an influence.

The Brockville chapter has dozens of letters to the editor published in the local newspaper each year. Why do you think this is important?
My first letter to the editor was in opposition to capital punishment back in 1962. It was more than 30 years later before I wrote another. Our local newspaper has a right-wing bias and by sending letters to the editor I hope to reach those people who might not be exposed to progressive views. It is a chance to speak to the unconverted.

What’s next for you?
My health is a bit shaky so I have stepped down as chairperson and contact, but I will continue on as a chapter member. Our chapter has decided to prioritize fighting the root cause of so many issues that we all face: the neoliberal ideology that has led Canada and the world for the past 30 years. I am on a committee that is working on this.

Do you have any advice for other chapters?
I would advise other chairpersons to delegate more than I ever was able to. And I would ask other chapters to join us in exposing and eradicating the neoliberal ideology. While we need to deal with issues as they arise, it is important not to take on too many things. If you are like the man who hopped on his horse and rode off in all directions you will get nowhere.

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.
An Inconvenient Trade Agreement: Canada begs its way into Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, but at what cost?

This past August, Rob Merrifield, the Conservative chairperson of the parliamentary trade committee, said a remarkable thing about the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement. “It’s kind of like Doha-lite. And you know where Doha went.”

Merrifield was responding to media questions about the Harper government’s trade agenda this fall, which includes solidifying Canada’s new role in the two-year-old, 11-country TPP negotiations, concluding a free trade agreement with the European Union, ratifying another one with Panama, and exploring the idea of a trade agreement with Japan. What made his Doha-lite comment so odd was how noticeably it clashed with the Harper government’s well-publicized campaign to get a seat at the TPP negotiating table – to the point that Canada accepted humiliating entry conditions from the Obama administration just to join.

If the TPP was destined to suffer the same fate as the long-stalled WTO Doha Round, why did Canada reportedly compromise its negotiating position with up-front concessions and accept a second-rate status? The impression is that Canada will accept an Asia-Pacific deal at any cost, even if it means sacrificing important domestic programs and policies that have long irritated U.S. trade officials.

The Controversial TPP

The TPP has been described as a new Free Trade Area of the Americas because of its goal to take the NAFTA model and expand it throughout Latin America and the Pacific. There are nine full negotiating partners: Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam; and two newcomers with diminished negotiating powers: Canada and Mexico.
Japan has expressed interest in joining the TPP, and the U.S. hopes that once the agreement is in place, other countries will be able to “dock,” or join the TPP zone with the same upfront concessions new country members make when they join the WTO.

The TPP is globally controversial in general because it advances a model of free-market globalization that has been fundamentally undermined by current events. Trade, investment and financial liberalization are among the main causes of runaway carbon emissions and climate changes. The globalization model has done little to create good, sustainable jobs, or to reduce poverty in Canada or worldwide. The TPP will also strip governments of their capacity to respond to the related social and environmental crises by enhancing corporate powers and entrenching corporations’ right to sue governments when public policies interfere with how, when and where investors make money.

Fair trade activists, including the Council of Canadians, in all TPP-participating countries are challenging the inclusion of an unaccountable investor-state dispute settlement process that has resulted globally in hundreds of millions of dollars in fines paid to multinational corporations. Activists also oppose strong intellectual property rights for brand-name pharmaceutical firms and the U.S. entertainment industry, which will compromise access to cheap medicines while upsetting privacy and innovation on the Internet.

Canada’s concessions

In Canada, the chapters on regulatory coherence, investment protection and intellectual property will be controversial. Already, the prospect of rising drug costs from patent and other intellectual property rights changes in the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) have sparked a backlash from Canadian municipalities, provinces, political parties and health groups.

More than 40 municipal governments have officially asked to be excluded from CETA procurement rules that forbid local purchasing strategies to create jobs or protect the environment. The federal and B.C. NDP have called for drug issues to be taken off the table – a position that a majority of TPP countries would prefer, but which Canada is not guaranteed to support. CETA negotiators are talking about “triangulating” the EU and TPP negotiations, which could imply the government is willing to side with Big Pharma over cheaper generic drugs in both sets of negotiations.

As an added insult, in the TPP, Canada and Mexico have apparently agreed to entry conditions that block them from making any changes to existing TPP negotiating texts. Neither country will be able to veto decisions by the others to close chapters in the future. Canada will finally get to see the TPP text in October, but will only make it to the December negotiating round, likely in New Zealand, missing the round that took place in Leesburg, Virginia, September 6 to 13. It should be noted that while 600 corporate lobbyists have seen the negotiating texts, they are not made available to the public in any participating country. This information is shielded from public input and scrutiny.

The Harper government has, in some ways, handed a blank cheque to U.S. and other TPP member countries looking for no-risk access to the Canadian market. Some reports indicate that Canada has made promises to weaken the supply management regime for dairy, which benefits Canadian farmers with a living wage, and consumers with a safe, stable supply of locally produced dairy products. Assurances from the government that supply management will, in fact, be protected ring hollow after the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board, which the Harper government accomplished on August 1, 2012 (court challenges pending).

A 2012 United States Trade Representative report of foreign trade barriers lists Ontario’s Green Energy Act, foreign ownership restrictions in telecommunications, Canadian content in broadcasting, and the Investment Canada Act as problem areas in Canadian policy. It raises the question of where else the Harper government has made promises for the sake of a place at the TPP table.

Marginal gains for the Canadian economy

The gains to the Canadian economy from a successful TPP negotiation are marginal to the point of being meaningless according to the few assessments that have been done of the deal. Canada’s biggest business lobby group, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, must recognize this fact since they now claim Canada’s participation in the TPP is a defensive move. We should be at the table so North American supply chains aren’t compromised, says CCCE President John Manley without showing how this would be the case. In other words, politics and peer pressure have won out over good economic sense and democracy.

The threats the TPP poses to Canadian public policies and farmers, health costs and access to medicines, our country’s imbalanced negotiating position, the intense secrecy and the pro-corporate bias to the TPP negotiations are all points that will fuel opposition, the same way they have for the Canada-EU trade deal. Rob Merrifield’s blasé attitude towards the TPP is perplexing and irritating but – we should hope – ultimately correct.

Stuart Trew is the Trade Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
Tar sands oil, which is currently being transported east across the country, may become a bigger threat to our Great Lakes in the near future.

In the 2008 report *How the Oil Sands Got to the Great Lakes Basin: Pipelines, Refineries and Emissions to Air and Water*, journalist David Israelson reveals the network of pipelines and refinery expansions that would increase the amount of tar sands bitumen shipped to and processed in the Great Lakes Basin. The report flags that “as many as 17 major refinery expansions are now either being considered, planned, applied for, approved or developed in and around the Great Lakes.” Israelson warns, “This expansion promises to bring with it an exponential increase in pollution – discharges into waterways including the Great Lakes, destruction of wetlands, toxic air emissions, acid rain, and huge increases in greenhouse gas emissions.”

BP’s Whiting refinery on Lake Michigan has been one of the most controversial and notorious expansions. The $3.8 billion expansion – to be completed in 2013 – would increase tar sands processing from 30 per cent of feedstock to 80 or 90 per cent. A recent decision by the National Energy Board permitted Enbridge to reverse the flow of Line 9 – a pipeline that runs from Sarnia to Westover, Ontario – which would allow Enbridge to transport tar sands oil from Alberta to the Great Lakes. Enbridge has noted that it would maintain the flow at 152,000 barrels of bitumen per day, but that capacity could eventually expand to 250,000 barrels per day.

Suncor is currently processing 85,000 barrels per day of tar sands bitumen into gasoline, kerosene, and jet and diesel fuels at its Sarnia refinery. This and other refineries pose serious environmental risks to residents of Sarnia, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation and other communities around the Great Lakes, and it may only get worse.

For more than two years now, there have been discussions among local, provincial and national politicians about redirecting tar sands crude to Sarnia for processing. The Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership released a lengthy brochure to attract refining companies that included promotions of local amenities, business opportunities and details about the services existing companies provide.

There are 62 oil, gas or chemical facilities within a 25-kilometre radius of the Aamjiwnaang First Nations community, who live on the shores of the St. Clair River south of Sarnia. The water and air pollution from these facilities are having shocking effects on the community. Twice as many girl babies as boy babies are being born in the Aamjiwnaang community. Canadian wildlife experts have also noted that frogs and other aquatic species are displaying unusual sexual attributes.

Ecojustice has launched a legal challenge, arguing that the Ontario Ministry of the Environment’s ongoing approval of pollution violates two community members’ “basic human rights under sections 7 and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – their rights to life, liberty and security of the person, and the right to equality.”

During the Council of Canadians’ Great Lakes Need Great Friends tour, which took place in May, National Chairperson Maude Barlow, Regional Organizer Mark Calzavara, London chapter activists Gary Brown and Don McLeod and I spent the afternoon visiting a part of Sarnia that the typical tourist doesn’t see. Ron Plain, an activist from the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, led the five of us on a “toxic tour” of Sarnia. The massive growth of the petrochemical industry has led the area to be dubbed “Chemical Valley.”

The Suncor facilities are the backdrop to the community’s graveyard, where family members and friends are buried, many of whom have died of cancer. An area ironically called “seniors’ island” highlights the strikingly low number of seniors in the community. Because the government has failed to properly warn about the danger of toxins, we saw signs posted by community members warning: “Keep Out! Talfourd Creek contains toxic substances known to cause serious health risks.”

Everyone has the right to the waters of the Great Lakes as well as a responsibility to protect them. We need to stop tar sands oil from coming east and further polluting the Great Lakes, one of the world’s most precious resources.

Emma Lui is a Water Campaigner for the Council of Canadians.
Teen Helps Turn Cities into Blue Communities

For the past year, 13-year-old Robyn Hamlyn has been tapping into growing water awareness in communities across Ontario.

It was documentary Blue Gold: World Water Wars, which was shown in Robyn’s Grade 7 class that spurred her into action.

“I guess it was really scary for me,” she explained. “Before, I had no idea that the Earth was running out of water. I had no idea it was going to impact us and that there was a deadline – that in 10 to 20 years from now we might be in the middle of a world water war, and that scared me. I thought, ‘this isn’t something we can just wait around for. People need to know about this, but so many people don’t.’”

She spoke to her mom about how she felt and her mom suggested that if she really wanted to do something, she should write a letter to her city’s mayor and tell him about her concerns. So Robyn did. She put pen to paper and told Kingston Mayor Mark Gerretsen her fears about the world’s diminishing water supplies, and what this will mean for her generation.

A few weeks later Robyn received a message on her answering machine inviting her in for a meeting with Mayor Gerretsen.

“That put me over the moon. I had no idea that my letter would actually do something and take the attention of someone so important and powerful,” said Robyn.

Before the meeting took place, Robyn decided to get in touch with Sam Bozzo, the director of Blue Gold, to get advice about what she could ask the mayor for. She knew they would talk about the facts – that the world is running out of fresh, clean water; that millions of people die every year without access to water; and that even Canada, a country mistakenly thought to have an abundance of water, is suffering the effects of pollution and misuse.

“I wasn’t really sure what I was going to ask for,” said Robyn. “I thought the mayor might give me a couple of water tips, but that’s not what I wanted – I wanted to do more.”

Bozzo suggested she speak with Maude Barlow, Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.
Robyn says she is amazed at how the Blue Communities campaign has snowballed and interest has grown. “I see how things are changing – how all of these people now know that the world is running out of water and that we all need to do something about it. All my classmates – they are so supportive. No one brings bottled water anymore. I think I’ve gotten the word out and I’m going to keep doing that because I love seeing people change their habits and do things differently.”

The biggest lesson she has learned is that anyone can make a difference. “I believe in the ‘power of one’ now,” said Robyn. “I think anybody can do anything as long as you put your heart into it. Even the smallest thing – like writing a letter – makes the biggest impact.”

The desire to speak out on water issues also runs in the family. Recently, Robyn’s 9-year-old brother Connor said he wanted to help the cause. “He got up and talked to kids in his school about what they can do to save water. He’s been helping me get the word out,” said Robyn. “Watching him do that – it’s an incredible feeling to see your little brother take on something so important.”

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Playing an integral role in sustaining these efforts is the Canada Plan, the Council’s monthly giving program. Stable, monthly donations provide us with the ability to react to urgent events, plan for the day-to-day needs of our core campaigns and fight for strong policies in support of public health care and water, sustainable energy policies and fair trade deals. Together, we act for social justice here in Canada and around the world.

Janette Johnston is a retired elementary school teacher who lives in Cobourg, Ontario. She is the mother of four children and grandmother of seven. She likes to stay involved in her community and has always been interested in environmental issues. Janette is also a dedicated, long-term Council of Canadians donor. She spoke to us recently about her decision to give to the Canada Plan on a monthly basis.

What motivated you to become a member of the Council of Canadians in 1998 and shortly thereafter join the monthly giving program?

I think it was the NAFTA issue and I probably heard Maude speak. [The Council] is one of the few organizations that work on environmental and Canadian issues at the same time. Both of those issues are very important to me.

The Council of Canadians is such a significant organization and it needs to be supported for the work it is doing. Giving monthly is easier for me to budget for because I am on a pension. I also try to give to special appeals too.

Have environmental and social justice issues always been a part of your life?

Yes, ever since I went to university. I think growing up I learned to enjoy nature from my parents, especially from my father. Although in those days we weren’t as worried about climate change and running out of habitat. However, now these issues are prominent and you come to care about them. I have always felt that social justice was important. I formed a lot of my opinions about the issues in university. I am also still very active politically.

You gave to the Council’s Democracy 24-7 Legal Fund. Why is this issue important to you?

It is so important that we have elections that are free elections, and that people can vote and speak out the way they want. That is what democracy is all about. I think that if political parties are stepping in and trying to inhibit people from voting that is totally wrong. That is why I supported [the fund]. We have to keep corruption out of our democratic process and out of our parliamentary system.

What would you say to someone who is thinking of joining the Council and the monthly giving program?

I would encourage them to join 100 per cent. It is because of the work that the Council does we have been able to maintain a socially democratic society. I am really glad I have been a supporter of the Council of Canadians for so many years.

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Canadians can feel it – something’s not right in our country when it comes to health care. We know our public system is fundamentally sound, but we also know that there is much work to be done to improve it and ensure it’s as sustainable as we want it to be for generations to come. We see our health care providers and provincial governments struggling to improve services in the context of tight public budgets and an aging population. Almost everyone is trying to make medicare better.

But one critical player is missing from the effort – where is our federal government when it comes to health care? Democratically elected leaders are expected to represent the views of their constituents. And in this case it’s clear: Canadians want our federal government to be part of the solution to the national challenges we face in health care. Public opinion research conducted for Health Canada released in May reinforced this message.

There is so much we could accomplish with federal leadership. We’re getting a raw deal on our pharmaceuticals; the federal government could coordinate a bulk-purchasing strategy and a national public drug formulary. As First Nations, refugees, rural and inner-city populations grapple with challenges to health equity, the federal government could be the leader in improving the health of society’s most vulnerable. And as inter-provincial inequities deepen in a number of areas, the federal government could ensure that all Canadians are able to expect timely access to a common basket of services, such as long-term care and home care, particularly as provinces are striving to meet the changing needs of an older population.

But instead of facing these challenges, in December 2011, the federal government announced that it would shift to a per capita transfer system that ties funding increases to economic growth. It then walked away from the 2014 Health Accord negotiating table, shirking a critical responsibility to provide leadership in transforming our health care system, and abandoning a commitment to ensuring that Canadians have comparable levels and quality of health care from province to province.

Why does the change in the funding formula matter? Originally, cash transfers were distributed on a formula that ensured that all provinces could meet national standards without the burden being more onerous on some than on others. A straight per capita tax transfer was seen as unfair because provinces with fewer resources would carry a heavier burden than more wealthy provinces. The same is still true today. But health care isn’t just about dollars and cents. No one wants a health care system that consumes endless pots of money. What the Government of Canada is really saying with this transfer is that it doesn’t want to be involved any more. They’re not interested in making sure that Albertans get the same standard of care as Nova Scotians, or that a successful new approach for wait times in Victoria is used in St. John’s as well. And that is what’s truly unacceptable.

There are already inequities in health care, with different levels of coverage for pharmaceuticals, long-term care and dental care from province to province. Currently, pharmaceutical coverage for seniors varies widely across the country. We need leadership to help ensure that our seniors are treated equitably from coast to coast. Moving forward without the federal government’s involvement in national standards will lead to deepening inequalities between provinces.

The federal government’s current strategy seems to be diminishing the expectations of Canadians, offloading all responsibility to the provinces, and letting the chips fall where they may. The idea that we will simply get used to health care being the sole responsibility of provinces is naïve. Canadians believe deeply in a society that takes care of each other, and one way that we express that belief is through medicare – it’s the highest expression of Canadians caring for one another. That aspiration is a national one, and it deserves the attention of our national leaders.

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and Dr. Danielle Martin is a family physician and Board Chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare. This op-ed originally appeared in the Huffington Post.
Canada is at the forefront of a disturbing global trend designed to ensure that the wealthiest corporations and governments have access to the planet’s dwindling resources, to the detriment of the most vulnerable people and our deeply stressed ecosystem.

Clearly the fight for scarce resources is increasing around the world. Our capacity to negatively impact the natural environment is growing through unprecedented advancements in technology, exacerbated by the mass-production/mass-consumption model that underpins the capitalist model. The over-exploitation of our natural world is moving to unprecedented levels and is increasingly geared towards meeting unsustainable lifestyles of the privileged. We are even running out of enough clean water, arable land and cheap energy to satisfy the very basic needs of humanity. We are reaching a tipping point in terms of the resilience of our planetary systems to absorb our impacts and this means that we cannot even begin to predict what comes next.

In this uncertainty, governments, including our own, see these developments through the lens of continued growth, the economy and control of resources. The greatest fear of corporations and their political proxies is that growth stalls and that the corporate machines and dependent economies sputter as we reach the limits of sustainability. The answer, they would posit, is that resources must go to the highest economic valued use under a property-rights, free-market trading system. This fear of the chaos the current system has wrought is now spawning an even greater threat, disguised as a positive way forward: the so-called “Green Economy.”

While we regularly hear about “peak” everything – from peak-oil to even peak-water – we seem incapable of heeding the excess of scientific proof and implementing governance systems to rein in the worst excesses we are wreaking upon the planet and equitably deal with the scarcity we are sowing.

Fundamentally, inaction means unprecedented rates of species extinction, massive movements of environmental refugees and increasing climate chaos. This is not the world we want to live in or bequeath to our children, yet we seem incapable of choosing a different path.

Clearly this inaction is not because of lack of awareness or effort. Those who realize that there needs to be immediate change to deal with these multiple crises are at every international gathering in force, and are working in communities around the globe. Their labours are being noticed, if not heeded.

No, the inability to deal with the challenges we face collectively is not due to lack of effort or evidence, it is due to collusion between our governments and powerful corporate interests to ensure that the system does not change and is not challenged in any meaningful measure. This was clearly demonstrated by the Rio+20 Summit this past June. The United Nations hosted the largest gathering of heads of state, government representatives and civil society in the history of the world, ostensibly to deal with issues of development, sustainability and the environment. Instead, the opportunity was co-opted in order to implement a shocking, market-based system of environmental allocation designed to benefit the already-wealthy at the expense of the rest of the planet.

The so-called “Green Economy” was roundly criticized and challenged for putting a price tag on nature itself, unleashing the destabilizing forces of speculation and commodification rather than protecting nature.

Canada and the Harper government were at the forefront of promoting this falsehood, even chairing the “Green Economy” segment of the summit and simultaneously obstructing efforts to promote human rights, the precautionary principle, or other previously agreed upon principles such as polluter-pays. Fortunately, some of Canada’s more extreme positions were rejected, including the attempt to deny recognition of the human right to water and sanitation. Through the first three rounds of negotiations, Canada tried to derail previous recognition of this fundamental right, drawing rebukes from UN experts and other member states. The Council of Canadians led a charge to challenge Canada’s position, which ultimately led to a major breakthrough. After years of denial and staunch opposition, and when it was clear that Canada was isolated in its ongoing denial, Canadian Environment Minister Peter Kent announced that the Canadian government had conceded and agreed to join the international community and recognize the human right to water and sanitation.

Our challenge now is to ensure that we demand accountability so that actions follow words and deeds align with rhetoric. Together we can take back our country and ensure we feel positive about the legacy we leave our children. A world moving towards true respect for human rights, equity, and social and environmental justice is not an option – it is the only way.

Anil Naidoo is the Project Organizer for the Council of Canadians’ Blue Planet Project.
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.

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