

Letters to the Editor



Phil Little and Council of Canadians board member Paul Manly (who is playing the part of "Pierre Poutine") take part in an action protesting Bill C-23, the so-called "Fair" Elections Act, in Nanaimo, B.C.

NO MORE LANDFILLS

Thank you to the Council of Canadians for standing with us to protect water, land and rural livelihoods against corporate plans to build privately owned mega-landfills for commercial and industrial waste in Ontario. We appreciate the Council's position to defend communities against landfills (an outmoded and ignorant method of disposal that began in the mid-1900s).

We are battling a mega-dump proposal in our communities and are working with many community activists elsewhere in Ontario, all of whom are fighting similar schemes.

Proponents claim landfills are safe, but a landfill is built by clear-cutting hundreds of acres of trees and shrubs, filling lakes, wetlands and streams, digging a huge hole below the water table and lining it with clay and thin plastic, and then dumping in millions of tonnes of garbage where it brews a poisonous mix of chemical compounds. It is then covered up and the company "monitors" the resulting toxic leachate's escape. All landfills leak eventually, most within a couple of decades. Then the landfill owners buy the contaminated land, which increases the buffer zone, and the landfill is expanded!

Despite thousands of complaints from dozens of communities, provincial governments keep allowing these monstrosities to be built, run by private interests, owner-monitored, and reported on voluntarily. Regulators like the Ontario Ministry of the Environment approve vague, inaccurate and misleading applications from these companies and then exercise little authority over them.

Landfills are environmental disasters when built, and as they age they become liabilities that are likely to end in catastrophe. If government agencies spent as much time seeking real waste reduction solutions as

they do with waste industry lobbyists this needless problem could be solved.

Harry Baker

President, Citizens' Environmental Stewardship Association – East of Ottawa
Russell, Ontario

Sue Langlois

President, Capital Region Citizens Coalition for the Protection of the Environment
Ottawa, Ontario

TIME TO LEGISLATE VOTING?

The "Get out and vote" letter by Judy Sumner in the autumn issue of *Canadian Perspectives* calls for a debate on an issue whose time has come. In fact, the issue has been around for a long, long time. Historically, politicians, pundits and newscasters have bemoaned the low turnout for elections – and matters are worsening. Fewer people are interested in the daily politic for a variety of reasons, and less interested in elections because they cannot be bothered to understand the complex issues at hand, and they are voluntarily joining the ranks of the disenfranchised.

It may be time to cross a philosophical threshold – from staunchly supporting the right of every Canadian citizen to vote to enacting legislation that will make voting a legal obligation. While this may raise the spectre of Big Brother and a limitation to civil liberties, one could easily argue otherwise. We may have to accept that the times of tolerance for non-participation in the exercise of our democracy are over; that such non-participation is no more acceptable than the non-payment of taxes, driving without a licence, or not attending school.

Simply put, we cannot have a functioning democracy without the participation of the electorate, and 52 per cent participation is not representation by the people.

Andre Clement

Sudbury, Ontario

FEED CHILDREN OR FLOG PIPELINES?

"Is it my job to feed my neighbour's child? I don't think so." That was the quote from Federal Minister of Industry James Moore, resident of B.C., the province with the worst child poverty level across Canada where thousands of kids go to school hungry every day. Despite a unanimous motion passed in the House of Commons back in 1989 to end poverty – a motion that was renewed in 2009 – Moore states that it is not federal responsibility to make sure children get a proper breakfast.

In the Bible, Cain says to God: "Am I my brother's keeper?" James Moore has given us the definitive response from the Conservative government. Hungry children can fend for themselves; the government is too busy flogging pipelines.

Larry Kazdan,

Vancouver, British Columbia

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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