

June 27, 2007

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Re: Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP)

Dear Prime Minister:

We, The National Council of Women of Canada, wish to address major concerns we have with the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) that Canada is evolving with the U.S. and Mexico.

We are extremely concerned with the seemingly secretive nature of the SPP. When Gordon Laxer, a professor at the University of Alberta's Parkland Institute, came as a witness to the Standing Committee for International Trade in May 2007 and began to speak about how NAFTA and SPP were affecting Canada's own energy security, Committee Chair Leon Benoit left the committee room. However, the hearings continued with Vice Chair, Liberal Lui Temelkovski, albeit unofficially. While this might have resulted in no official record, the committee met later and voted 6 to 4 to put the hearing on the record. Mr. Laxer's testimony would otherwise have been lost.

Mr. Laxer's testimony is of the utmost importance if Canada is to have energy security and deal effectively with climate change. Mr. Laxer is quoted as saying: *"Canada now exports 63 percent of our oil and 56 percent of our natural gas production [while] we import about 40 percent of our oil to meet 90 percent of Atlantic Canada's and Quebec's needs, and 40 percent of Ontario's."*

Dorval Brunelle, professor of sociology at the Université du Québec à Montréal, has said that *"ultimately, the SPP aims to create a common defence policy which will place Canada, the U.S., and Mexico under a single military command, undermining sovereignty."*

It has been alleged that corporations, in conjunction with the American Congress, are implementing policies without the knowledge of Mexican and Canadian legislators. John Foster, principal researcher at the North-South Institute in Ottawa, said *“that executives from the corporations advise the governments of Canada, the U.S., and Mexico on priorities and have access to top politicians that ‘none of us has.’”* He also stated that we must not allow corporations to set the agenda for democracies. Hassan Yusseff of the Canadian Labour Congress states that the SPP puts Canadian interests below U.S. economic interests.

When corporations and other legislators are alleged to be “calling the shots,” the issue arises of whether or not Canadian sovereignty is being compromised. When the SPP is conducting its business under the radar of the average Canadian and without the sanction of Parliament, we believe there is no question that our sovereignty is being challenged.

When this is being done by our “new government” (contrary to its long-standing call for and repeated commitment to “transparency” in all actions), we indeed need to be convinced that if this is in Canada’s best interests, it should be debated and decided by our Parliament, not the U.S. Congress.

There was a unanimous recommendation at our recent AGM to address our concerns to you, Prime Minister. The issues we speak to are long-standing NCWC policies:

- ❖ That Canadian political sovereignty is retained (88.17E).
- ❖ That Canada sign only those agreements that guarantee Canadian ownership and control of vital natural resources (98.6).
- ❖ That the Government of Canada assert sovereignty over Canadian water resources, and ensure that multilateral trade agreements guarantee compliance with Canadian ownership and control over the delivery of vital natural resources (91.15EM).
- ❖ That the Government of Canada retain and promote an active, independent and strong regulatory role in the protection of the environment (97.4).
- ❖ That the Government of Canada respect the economic, political and constitutional sovereignty of Canada and guarantee Canadian ownership and control over the delivery of vital natural resources, such as water, electricity and natural gas; and guarantee compliance with Canadian environmental standards (98.6).

It is *not enough* to state on the SPP website that it “[respects] the sovereignty and unique heritage, culture and laws of each country.” All SPP discussions must be brought into the legislative and public domains *immediately*.

Sincerely,

Karen Dempsey,
President NCWC

cc: The Honourable Jack Layton
The Honourable Stéphane Dion
Mr. Gilles Duceppe

With approximately three-quarters of a million members, ***The National Council of Women of Canada*** is a federation comprised of Local Councils, Provincial Councils, and National Organizations. Founded in 1893, it was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1914 and has been designated by the Government of Canada as being of national historic significance for its role in Canadian women’s history. For more information, consult our web site at www.ncwc.ca or contact our national office at #205, 251 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1X3.