

ON THE ROAD WITH MAUDE BARLOW



Irena Solina

Dear friends,

Well, another busy season filled to the brim with work and activism is upon us. I hope you had some quiet time to rest and reflect this summer.

I spent some precious time with my four small grandchildren, who remind me on a daily basis why I am doing this work. At our cottage in the Gatineau Hills, we connect with nature, and I get to see it all for the first time again with little ones just learning about mergansers, fireflies and deer.

The more I learn in all of the areas of the Council's work, the more I understand that it comes back to balance, and protecting the natural world around us. Like many of you, I am very frightened for the next generations who must live with a diminished planet, and I worry about the millions of children who grow up never breathing clean air, tasting clean water or seeing a living creature in the wild.

All this to say that I am renewed to join you in our dream of a better world and

Maude is joined by renowned water conservationist Rajendra Singh and Stephen Starr, producer of the film *Flow: For Love Of Water* for a recent premiere of the film.

in fighting to protect the natural gifts we have been given. As I write this, I am preparing for a trip to Australia, where the devastation of the drought (the "big dry") has been likened to the forcible removal of indigenous peoples from their land, only in this case nature left, abandoning millions to cope without water or arable land. This is the first "First World" country to hit the water wall and there is much to be learned from this awful story.

We have our challenges here in Canada too. The Great Lakes are in crisis, depleting faster than they can be replenished by nature. I spoke in the summer at the annual meeting of the Canadian Water Resources Association held in Gimli, Manitoba, on the shore of beautiful Lake Winnipeg, which is now the sickest body of water in Canada, perhaps in North America. I reflected on the irony of holding the meeting here

and vowed to help save that magnificent body of water. And of course, the devastation of the tar sands development in Alberta is growing, as is our campaign to bring a sustainable future to the area.

Our governments seem to be unable to learn from the past, or even from recent events. Even as the WTO Doha talks collapsed yet again from the resistance in the global South to this model of unbridled growth and greed, and the price of oil and shipping costs went so high that the CIBC World Markets Report declared economic globalization dead, the Harper government continues to plan for massive Asian trade and port expansion in Canada and provincial governments continue to promote more unregulated free trade inside Canada's borders. While the rest of the world is looking to a model of local food production and sustainable living, our governments continue to plan for unlimited growth, basing Canada's future prosperity on our dwindling resources.

These and other issues will form the heart of our Annual General Meeting this year. Called "Boom for Whom? Busting the Myths of Continental Integration," this year's AGM, which will be held in Edmonton, Alberta, October 31–November 2, promises to be the best yet. We will welcome world-renowned experts David Schindler and Andrew Nikiforuk and dozens of passionate writers, scholars and activists who will speak on the most pressing issues of our time. I invite you to come meet our wonderful staff and chapter leaders and be inspired.

And remember what the Talmud says: You are not required to finish the job; neither are you permitted to lay it down.

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.