

# On the Road with Maude Barlow



Trent University

Maude Barlow received an honorary degree during convocation ceremonies at Trent University in June. All graduates were given stainless steel water bottles and Maude led them in a toast to the future, encouraging them to consider a life of activism.

Dear friends,

As always, you find us full of enthusiasm for the challenges and successes that face us all this year, here in Canada and around the world. The theme of change runs throughout all our campaigns and increasingly we understand that if we are to be successful in fighting for just policies on trade and energy, water and health care, and new terms of Canada-U.S. relations towards a just and sustainable North America, we need to confront the larger ideological backdrop against which current decisions are made.

For years, we have been told that unlimited growth, unregulated free trade and economic globalization would bring prosperity to all. All boats would rise with the tide of surging markets and all would share in the prosperity that growth would bring. After twenty years of this model it is clear that only certain vessels have been able to ride out the tide of despair that devastated the global economy over the last year. Trusting that unregulated global markets and financial speculation would somehow magically weed out the excesses was a terrible gamble that has devastated millions of employed and destroyed the lives of millions more living on the margins of poverty. For those already among the world's desperately poor, the financial crisis has condemned them and perhaps their children and grandchildren to a life of wretched survival.

This November we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the "Battle in Seattle" – the WTO Millennium Round that was to solidify economic globalization in international constitutional law and serve as the crowning achievement for the corporate sector in setting new trade rules. However, 80,000 protesters (myself among them!) descended on the city to assert our vision for a different world built on more just and sustainable rules and changed the game forever. I knew we were going to shut the meeting down when, on the opening night of our teach-in preceding the official launch, 3,000 people roared in support as our panel came onto the stage at the Benaroya Hall. As I looked over the crowd, my opening words were, "Oh they should be worried!" From that memorable week on, we continued to challenge the WTO at

every turn (it is still stalled 10 years later), and we stopped the spread of NAFTA to Latin America.

Our answers are the right ones: more local sustainable food production and trade, local economic development, strong social programs, and protection of local resources. Yet our governments are now promoting what I call the "perfect storm" of new free trade initiatives: deregulated interprovincial free trade, a Canada-EU services agreement that would put all Canadian services under threat of corporate control, and the extension of NAFTA to provincial and local levels of government that would have to open up their procurement bids to American companies. So, as always, we have our work cut out for us and will be escalating our campaigns to meet these challenges. It is astounding to me that, in the face of such obvious failure of the "free" trade model, proponents of unlimited growth and unregulated markets still think they have the only answer to the world's severe problems. And as we know from our energy and water campaigns, they are now promoting the failed market model for resources – from commodifying water to setting a market solution to climate change.

All of these issues and more will be front and centre at our AGM this year, which will be held in beautiful Saint John, New Brunswick, October 23-25. The theme, "Turning the Tide: A just economy for people and the planet," will resonate with us all and offer the opportunity to work together towards just solutions in an unjust economy. Nowhere has been harder hit by the financial crisis than Atlantic Canada, and we will come together there to share our thoughts on just alternatives that focus on people, the environment and democracy. I will be there and I hope you will be too!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maude Barlow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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