

On the Road with **Maude Barlow**

Dear friends,

As I write this, we are in the midst of intense campaign work on all fronts!

The “perfect storm” of new trade deals that we have been warning about is upon us, with a sell-out “deal” to supposedly exempt Canada from the U.S. “Buy American” provision of President Obama’s stimulus bill, the signing of Canada’s provinces to the World Trade Organization Agreement on Procurement that starts the process of unlocking all local contracts to foreign competition, furious pressure from the Harper government to force the provinces to agree to abide by international trade discipline, and fast-paced negotiations with Europe on a comprehensive deal that will threaten all public services. The Council has been rallying opposition to these bad trade deals as we have in the past and will continue to fight for fair trade and an economy based on local stewardship, democracy and justice.

After our wonderful Blue Summit in Ottawa that brought hundreds of water justice activists together, we are working harder than ever for laws and policies to protect our precious water heritage forever. We join with First Nations communities and others to expose the folly of Schedule 2, the amendment to the Fisheries Act that allows pristine lakes to be reclassified as “Tailings Impoundment Areas” and used as toxic dump sites for mining operations. We are also working hard to expose and reverse the move to create the first water markets in Canada, tellingly in its driest province, Alberta, as well as fighting possible water privatizations in Winnipeg and Victoria.

We, of course, continue to support the right of others around the world to safe, clean drinking water. We are supporting water workers in Chile who are outraged that the pension funds of Ontario teachers are being invested in the private water services of that country; we are backing activists in Chiapas Mexico and El Salvador who are fighting the water-destructive practices of Canadian mining companies;

and working with a Colombian network to amend that country’s constitution to recognize the right to water. We are continuing our involvement with the United Nations, working with several friendly countries to promote a UN General Assembly emergency resolution on the water crisis.

The United Nations was an important backdrop to our campaign for energy security and climate justice as a team of Council board members and staff attended the climate summit in Copenhagen in December. Outraged that our government announced ahead of time that the summit would fail, and armed with the information that Canada is one of the 10 worst greenhouse gas emissions polluters, we spoke loudly and passionately against our government’s policies and its intended expansion of the tar sands in northern Alberta.

Ongoing work continues on many other fronts as well: our opposition to the Harper Cabinet’s relaxing of foreign ownership rules in telecom; local fights to protect our public health care; and preparations for the Toronto summits of the G8 and the G20. We were deeply involved in the protests against the prorogation of Parliament by the Harper government and continue to work with others to expose the profoundly anti-democratic nature of this government.

On a sad note, we offer condolences to the family and friends of Ellard Powers, a long-time member of the Council and valued contributor to our advisory board. Ellard was recognized by friends and

colleagues as a strong leader and voice for the farming community through his efforts in both the National and Ontario Farmers Unions. We also mourn the passing of Bernice Packford, a founding member of the Council, and someone who embraced and lived the true spirit of activism. She fought to protect parks and water in her community of Victoria, B.C., and regularly challenged plans to cut down trees and deplete water supplies.

My personal travels are taking me far and wide this term, including many cities and rural communities in Canada, a number of universities in the United States from Alaska to Tennessee, Paris for a debate on the future of water, and Bolivia for the climate justice summit.

As always, it is the strength and support of you, our members and activists, that keeps me going. Our chapters have never been stronger, more successful and committed than they are now; they are the lifeblood of the Council of Canadians. And as we celebrate this, our 25th year of acting for social justice in Canada and around the world, we do it with deep gratitude and respect for all of you who contribute so generously to make this important work possible.



Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians



Maude joins First Nations people in calling on the Canadian government to shut down the tar sands, a massive, environmentally devastating bitumen mining industry in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Maude and a team of Council staff were in Copenhagen last December for UN climate change talks. Canada, and the tar sands, have been singled out as main contributors to greenhouse gas emission problems.

Logan Price