



On the Road with **Maude Barlow**

Maude Barlow speaks at the “Time For Change” public forum in London, Ontario in June. The Council of Canadians co-hosted forums across the country with Unifor aimed at encouraging people to vote in the federal election October 19.

Dear friends,

We celebrate our thirtieth anniversary this year. Thirty years! I can hardly believe it.

I remember the founding of the Council of Canadians well. I met so many wonderful people I had only known and admired from afar: Mel Hurtig, Marion Dewar, Bob White, Pierre Burton, Margaret Atwood, David Suzuki, Grace Hartman, Walter Gordon, Ed Broadbent and many more.

We came together to fight Brian Mulroney and Ronald Reagan’s free trade agreement – the one that would launch NAFTA, the WTO and the MAI – and to fight for a different vision for our country and our continent. So was founded a movement that is still going strong and growing, and that has tackled so much more over the years.

It was our vision then, and remains so now, that the policies of economic globalization – unlimited growth, corporate-friendly “free” trade, privatization of essential services, deregulation of financial markets, and the gutting of environmental protections to promote a free market – would create deeper social inequality inside and between nations and devastate the environment.

Indeed, in the year 2000, there were 111 billionaires in the world; this year there are 1,826. The income gap is widening everywhere and the UN warns about the rise of “the Precariat” – the three-quarters of the world without a secure job. And we all know the dire warnings about climate change, destruction of forests and wetlands, and disappearing watersheds. This is a failed model and it is time to assert

a new one based on the principles of equality and justice for all and reverence for – and fierce protection of – the planet.

This vision is present in all of our campaigns. We fight not just to stop the continued erosion of our public health care system, but for an expansion of it to include home care, long-term care, and a national pharmacare plan.

We don’t oppose bad trade agreements because we oppose trade – this is a false accusation. We oppose them because they are not really about trade at all, but about challenging the right of governments to protect their people and natural resources. Deals like the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership represent a model of corporate power that profoundly undermines democracy.

When we fight fracking or massive pipelines, it is because we want to preserve our water heritage for future generations, and we work for sound environmental law that will stand the test of time.

When we oppose water privatization here in Canada and around the world, we do so by working with local grassroots and Indigenous communities to assert their local authority and promote their human rights to clean safe water and sanitation for all.

When we fight voter fraud and bad election laws, it is because we know our democracy is precious, but also fragile, and we want to build a society in which everyone is welcome to participate in the democratic process.

We have had many successes over the years. When I hear Stephen Harper and Jean Chrétien take credit for not allowing the deregulation of the banks, I remember the fight we led to stop the Chrétien government from doing just that!

And with our civil society allies – unions, environmentalists, First Nations, human rights activists, students, women, and many others – we have kept alive the dream of a better Canada and a better world in the face of constant threat.

I often wonder what Canada would look like without the Council of Canadians and the incredible energy and commitment of our many supporters, staff and board members, and chapter activists. I want to thank each and every one of you for the commitment and faith in our organization and movement. I surely could not do my work without all of you.

As we pass through this historic federal election, we face an incredibly busy year, and the rebuilding of our country. In December, I will proudly represent the Council in Paris for the UN climate summit, perhaps one of the most important global gatherings ever. You can be sure our vision and values will be put forward in your name.

So thank you for 30 wonderful years – and here’s to the next 30!

With hope and resolve,

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.