

NEWS: Barlow calls for action in Sault Ste. Marie to protect the Great Lakes

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Cheryl Lsuggashie, Josephine Mandamin, Maude Barlow, Joanne Robertson in Sault Ste. Marie

Sault Ste. Marie is a community of 75,000 people located in northern Ontario on the eastern tip of Lake Superior.

SooToday reports, "Living beside one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world, it can be difficult to believe there's a global water crisis. But we must think about water usage on a global scale, said Maude Barlow on Tuesday morning. ...The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) hosted *Too Late to Panic: Protecting Canada's Water and Energy Supplies* with special guest speaker Maude Barlow at Algoma's Water Tower Inn. Maude Barlow is an environmental activist, chairperson of the advocacy group The Council of Canadians, and has authored/co-authored 16 books."

"If we are aware of what's happening globally it will only help us understand what to do locally,' said Barlow. 'Sitting on top of the Great Lakes makes it difficult to see the global water crisis and plan for future issues.' ...With the continued destruction of the wetlands, fast-tracked economic growth in the mining sectors, and over usage of water are just some of the factors that contribute to our own water crisis. ...'90,000 people in Detroit Michigan cannot afford to pay for water and have had that service cut off,' Barlow said. 'A basic right, inaccessible due to the high cost.'"

"Barlow illustrated the need for action locally in Sault Ste. Marie. 'The conservation, preservation and recovery of the Great Lakes are vital to your future; and our future,' she said. 'Living in a water rich location gives us the responsibility to take care of it.' Maude Barlow encouraged the creation of a local chapter of the Council of Canadians, a progressive association which advocates on behalf of its members."

The *Sault Star* adds, "The Great Lakes are 'in crisis' with too much water being drawn from the five waterways and new invasive species springing from the ballast of international freighters, warns a veteran environmental activist. Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians, spoke to about 60 people Tuesday at Algoma's Water Tower Inn. 'We may live in a water-rich area, but the world is running out of water,' said Barlow in an interview following her morning presentation. 'Running out. Not drought. Running out.' Water demand is expected to outstrip supply by 40% in 2030 when the world population is projected to be eight billion. ...'Don't assume that you can't have a huge body of water that runs dry because it's happened,' said Barlow. 'There is a comet coming to the Earth. It's called the water crisis. There's no such place on Earth as water secure forever.'"

"She isn't hopeful about the future of the Great Lakes unless community groups start to lobby the provincial and federal governments to protect the largest group of fresh water lakes in the world. Canada's national water act is more than 40 years old. During a question and answer session, Barlow called Prime Minister Stephan Harper's Conservative government 'the most anti-environmental we've ever had. 'I don't think (change) is going to come top down,' she said."

"We're losing the battle of the Great Lakes. We need a whole new model for protection of the Great Lakes.' The Council of Canadians recently released Barlow's report, *Our Great Lakes Commons: A People's Plan to Protect the Great Lakes Forever*. The 38-page document calls on provinces, states, First Nations and the

American and Canadian federal governments to regard the Great Lakes 'as one watershed, not as a bunch of lakes. (It's) something that belongs to us all that must be managed for the equitable use of us all,' said Barlow. 'Nobody must be allowed to damage it.'"

"She recommends stakeholder groups in Sault Ste. Marie get together and map out a 50-year plan detailing how much water is available, what demands exist and how the community's population will change over five decades.

'More and more we're going to find that local communities, the stand they take, and the principles they put forward are going to matter incredibly,' said Barlow. 'The world will come calling for this water. We have the responsibility to say how we've taken care of it — or not.'"