

Make London a Blue Community



Blue Communities co-founder Maude Barlow will be Brescia's Chancellor



LOCAL NEWS

Author, activist Maude Barlow named Brescia University College chancellor

Award-winning author and activist Maude Barlow has been named the next chancellor at Brescia University College at Western University.

Barlow, who has received 14 honorary doctorates, is also the honorary chairperson of the Council of Canadians and co-founder of the Blue Project, a global clean-water initiative.

London Free Press, January 7, 2020

The Council of Canadians, the Blue Planet Project and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) initiated the Blue Communities Project in 2009.

Blue Communities Philosophy

Enshrine water as a common resource, essential to life, for safe keeping and accessibility – a public trust, with public interests having priority over private for-profit interests.

57 municipalities and 16 communities world-wide have become Blue Communities, with more to come.

A Blue Community resolves:

- That water and sanitation are human rights
- That bottled water in municipal facilities and events will be phased out or banned
- To promote public ownership and operation of water and waste water services

The Blue Community London proposal was presented to ACE in 2018, and referred to staff for consideration.

City staff reported to the Civic Works Committee in March 2019. The Committee voted not to proceed with a feasibility study. The project was referred back to ACE.

We are here today to respond to the concerns that were raised by staff and the Civic Works Committee.

London is very close to qualifying as a Blue Community.

Bottled water in municipal facilities and events will be phased out or banned:

London has already banned bottled water in municipal facilities.

Fountains and bottle refill stations have been installed in public places.

[Thirstmobiles and Thirststations](#) provide drinking fountains and water bottle refill stations at outdoor events during the summer.

Public ownership and management of water and waste water services will be promoted:

London's systems are publicly owned, so London is already meeting this standard. (See the Municipal Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act)

We have provided a report on the dangers of privatization in other municipalities:



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Municipalities are under constant pressure to sell our valuable municipal services (e.g. the new federal Infrastructure Bank encourages P3s).

The resolution would be a statement of intent to keep London's water systems in public hands.

Regarding **water as a human right**, staff referred to a possible feasibility study re: costs to the city

- No municipality has lost the Blue Communities designation due to water shut-offs.
- No municipality has reported an increase in unpaid bills after becoming a Blue Community.
- London has a Customer Assistance Program, paid for by rate-payers, that helps customers who struggle with paying their water and hydro bills.
- Other municipalities (e.g. Vancouver) add unpaid water bills to property taxes.
- We ask that staff undertake the feasibility study, and possibly consult with Nanaimo, who have already done so and became a Blue Community.

London can join with Canadian Blue Communities such as

Bayfield (2014)

The Sisters of St. Joseph (2017)

Niagara Falls (2012),

St. Catharines (2012)

Trois Rivières (2019)

Montreal (2019)

... in all, 42 Canadian municipalities and communities to date

And globally, Berlin, Paris, Bern, Los Angeles etc.

List of Blue Communities



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London becoming a Blue Community is doable and virtually cost free.

We're almost there! Two out of the three requirements are already in place due to Council and staff's forward thinking.

Becoming a Blue Community aligns with London's stated intents and values:

- London recognizes the climate emergency
- London recognizes housing as human right
- London already bans bottled water in city facilities and events
- London already has public ownership of water services

"Blue Community" designates a municipality that enshrines water as a human right. As the Sisters of St. Joseph say, "water is the first medicine" and as First Nations neighbours say, "water is life".

Please protect our water!