

Access to drinking water a world problem, expert says

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THE GAZETTE

Canadians need to wake up to the global water problem even though Canada is in no imminent danger of running dry, water activist Raymond Jost warns.

"It's a problem facing the world, and we are part of the world," he said. "Just because we have a lot of water doesn't mean there's no problem."

Jost is head of the Montreal-based In-

ternational Secretariat for Water, a non-governmental organization with a mission to promote universal access to drinking water and sanitation.

Jost spoke yesterday to a gathering organized by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. He encouraged growing awareness that access to clean water is increasingly threatened in the world and its lack in large parts of the world is a leading cause of sickness and death.

Global warming is exacerbating the

problem, he said. "Climate change is 80 per cent a water problem."

Jost said the key to tackling the problem is raising public awareness and mobilizing public pressure on governments to deal with it.

Handling it will require a global effort involving inter-governmental collaboration and pooling of resources and expertise on a global scale, he said. "We have a lot of people with resources and know-how, but to reach people who have

no access to water we have to change a lot in our way of thinking. For this you must have the voice of the people."

Jost said that when he founded the water secretariat 18 years ago, his message was a hard sell. "Nobody understood what we were about, but that is changing. Now is the time to link all this energy in the world. It's a question of saving the planet. We have no choice."

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