

An investment in our future

Three-quarters of a billion dollars is a huge amount of money by any standard, and a vast expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Over 25 years — 1990 to 2015 — that is the amount that will or should be spent on the cleanup and improvement of Hamilton Harbour.

We should not be scared off, or diverted from the goal of a clean and healthy harbour, by that sum. This 25-year project is about revitalizing one of this city's most valuable — and abused — assets.

Hamilton Harbour, also known (especially to our closest neighbour) as Burlington Bay, is the defining feature of this city. It is central to our natural, aboriginal, immigrant and industrial history.

In very recent years, a whole new level of public access to this city's waterfront has resulted in the harbour being rediscovered by hundreds of thousands of citizens and visitors.

Only a few visionaries imagined 10 years ago that people would flock to walk the harbour's trails, let their children splash on new beaches, take harbour cruises, dine out beside the water, and enjoy festivals, museums and Canada's most venerated warship.

Wildlife, from herons and cormorants to bass and pike, has returned to the harbour.

About \$410 million has been spent so far, and about \$369 million more is needed to meet the goal of having the harbour removed from an international list of Great Lakes pollution hot spots.

Some of that will go toward capping and containing Randle Reef, laced with toxic coal tars just offshore from Stelco's property. Some will go toward turning the notoriously polluted Windermere Basin, at the east end of the harbour, into an environmentally valuable wetland. Some will go to increasing the city sewage treatment and containment facilities so that repeats of last Friday's sewage overflow into the harbour become rarer.

The money has been — and will be — well spent.

We cannot feel good about where we live if we are embarrassed by the state of it; conversely, we can take pride in bringing life back to the harbour, in it, around it and on it. There is resurgent civic pride in Hamilton, and much of that has to do with us seeing and experiencing our city and its most striking natural feature in a new and positive way.

Robert Howard

ACRONYM-ISTIC

Two acronyms are mentioned in any discussion of Hamilton Harbour cleanup:

RAP: The Remedial Action Plan is a plan to "delist" or clean up Hamilton Harbour, developed by a stakeholder group representing more than 40 agencies from industry, environment and government.

www.hamiltonharbour.ca/rap

BARC: The Bay Area Restoration Council is a community not-for-profit group mandated to "promote, monitor and assess the implementation of the Hamilton Harbour RAP" and, more widely, promote cleanup projects for the Hamilton Harbour and its watershed. It is governed by a volunteer board of directors.

www.hamiltonharbour.ca