

Minister mum on Randle Reef

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Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten says the McGuinty government puts the environment first, but she won't commit the government to helping fund the cleanup of toxic contaminated Randle Reef.

The minister would offer no assurances last night about when Hamilton and Burlington can expect the Liberal government to fund its \$30-million share of the \$90-million cleanup of the Hamilton Harbour hot spot deemed the second-worst case of coal tar contamination in Canada after the Sydney tar ponds. Ottawa is also expected to contribute \$30 million.

"I can't speak directly to Randle Reef," the minister said after speaking at the nomination meeting for Burlington Liberal candidate Marianne Meed Ward, a Toronto Sun columnist, at the Burlington Art Centre.

"My message to the communities of Hamilton and Burlington is to make sure that they continue to advocate on the importance of the environment and look very closely at the track record of the McGuinty government."

Broten said her government has put up \$30 million for other Great Lakes cleanup projects. She said Ottawa needs to put up its share for Randle Reef as it did for the Sydney tar ponds, but she wouldn't address what is the hold up from the province.

"We certainly need action from the federal government," the minister said. "We need to see them participate in the cleanup."

Meed Ward, 41, is making her second foray into politics. The mother of three ran unsuccessfully last year in Ward 1.

She faces a tough challenge.

The Tories have held Burlington since 1943 and former Halton chair Joyce Savoline retained it for the party in the recent byelection.

Popular councillor Joan Lougheed ran for the Liberals.

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