

## 'Success story in progress,' IJC says of harbour

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(Nov. 29, 2002) -- The International Joint Commission, calling Hamilton Harbour "a success story in progress," is urging the federal and provincial governments to continue funding remedial work, to help Hamilton pay for multimillion-dollar sewer improvements and to finance cleanup of toxic sediment on Randle Reef.

Former deputy prime minister Herb Gray, chair of the commission's Canadian section, and his U.S. counterpart, Dennis Schornack, have written federal Environment Minister David Anderson and Ontario Environment Minister Chris Stockwell, praising work done so far and pressing the senior governments to commit funds to finish the job.

The letter says lots more work and money will be needed to reach the point the harbour can come off the commission's list of 42 Great Lakes pollution hot spots, or areas of concern, by 2015, as proposed.

"An estimated \$478 million is required over the next 10 to 12 years to upgrade the City of Hamilton's wastewater and combined sewer systems. A further \$18 million to \$25 million is required for the proposed Randle Reef sediment remediation project.

"These projects are clearly beyond local capacity and will require assistance from a number of parties. Water rates have already been increased considerably by the local council to help defray some of the upgrades."

Gray toured the harbour in June, and members of the commission's Great Lakes Water Quality Board met people involved with the Remedial Action Plan (RAP) the next day.

In their letter, the two commissioners report: "The board was particularly impressed with the significant progress which has been made in restoring Hamilton Harbour, ranging from increased public access to the shoreline, to improved vegetation and water quality. People can safely swim in the harbour for the first time in 50 years.

"Much of the success to date is attributable to the strong local leadership which has built community capacity and fostered ownership of both the environmental problems and their resolution. The Bay Area Restoration Council (the community group) and the Bay Area Implementation Team (the implementers) provide effective means for local stakeholder engagement, leadership, and accountability for planning and implementation of programs and measures to restore and protect Hamilton Harbour. Key to the achievements is the federal support for the position of a RAP co-ordinator."

The commissioners go on to recommend:

\* "The governments of Canada and Ontario continue to provide funding for the RAP co-ordinator, projects and general administration as well as scientific and technical expertise."

\* "The governments of Canada and Ontario commit to a partnership with the City of Hamilton to finance upgrades to wastewater infrastructure."

\* "The governments of Canada and Ontario proceed with the technical assessment of the remediation of the contaminated sediment in the area of Randle Reef and create a partnership for the necessary funding to implement the project."

In conclusion, they say: "The commission encourages all levels of government and the private sector to support the implementation of the RAP and provide the assistance needed to build on its past successes, to achieve its delisting targets and to be an example and inspiration to other areas of concern."

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