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Victory in sight in bid to clean up harbour

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There are a dozen years of work ahead and more than \$600 million left to spend, but those working on an ambitious revitalization of Hamilton Harbour say victory is in sight.

A 10-year update of the effort to clean up the troubled harbour shows it is within reach to restore the harbour's water quality, fish and wildlife and to lure residents and tourists back to the waterfront by 2015.

John Hall, co-ordinator of the harbour's Remedial Action Plan (RAP), said Hamilton is halfway toward its goal of removing itself from a 1987 list of communities that failed to meet Great Lakes quality standards. "When we started this voyage, some said it couldn't be done," Hall told a group assembled to celebrate RAP's progress report at the Royal Hamilton Yacht Club last night.

"We now know it is a voyage we can complete. Our scientists tell us that." The key challenges ahead include containing the contamination of Randle Reef and securing provincial and federal funding to help with about \$480 million of upgrades needed to Hamilton's water and sewage systems. A tremendous amount of money is at stake, so doing the 10-year review was key to making sure the process is on track, said Marilyn Baxter, Bay Area Restoration Council manager.

"We want to make sure when we spend money that the harbour will respond. We can go forward confidently from here." There is progress. Water quality has improved faster than expected. Fish and wildlife have returned. More people are using the harbourfront and the area is losing its stigma.

"People are surprised when they get here and they are starting to take pride in what is happening," said Baxter.

Herb Gray, Canadian chair of the International Joint Commission, the body charged with monitoring the Great Lakes, said Hamilton should celebrate its accomplishments.

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