

April 4, 2000 -- Toronto

For immediate release

Environment Ministers abandon cleanup agreements covering 16 Great Lakes toxic hotspots in Ontario

Thunder Bay, Belleville, Cornwall, Windsor, Port Hope, The Soo

Canadian Environment Minister David Anderson and Ontario Environment Minister Dan Newman have allowed the agreement to clean up contaminated hotspots in the Great Lakes to expire, leaving nearby residents in the lurch, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law & Policy (CIELAP) said today.

"Millions of people living adjacent to contaminated waters around the Great Lakes have been abandoned by the two governments that are responsible for their environmental protection," said Anne Mitchell, executive director of CIELAP.

The two ministers allowed the Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) to expire March 31, leaving cleanups at 16 particularly contaminated places (called "Areas of Concern") yet to be completed. The Areas of Concern which are affected by the expiry of COA are:

- Lake Superior: Thunder Bay; Nipigon Bay; Jackfish Bay; Peninsula Harbour
- Lake Huron/Georgian Bay: Spanish Harbour; Severn Sound
- Lake Erie: Wheatly Harbour
- Lake Ontario: Hamilton; Toronto; Port Hope; Bay of Quinte; St. Lawrence River (Cornwall)
- Connecting Rivers: St. Mary's River; St. Clair River; Detroit River; Niagara River

In a news release issued on the day the agreement expired, Mr. Anderson announced his "intention of negotiate with Ontario on a new Canada-Ontario agreement to continue joint efforts to cleanup and protect the Great Lakes. The world's largest freshwater resource." A spokesman for Mr. Newman was quoted as saying the province had no response yet to Mr. Anderson's request for new talks.

"Ottawa and Queen's Park have fumbled the ball. They've let down people in dozens of communities from Thunder Bay to Cornwall. We're urging Mr. Newman and Mr. Anderson to get an agreement signed immediately, and start cleaning up these sites," said Mark Winfield, research director at CIELAP.

For more information contact:

Anne Mitchell
Executive Director
(416)-923-3529 ext 25
info@cielap.org

The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy has for been commenting on and monitoring policy and regulatory changes related to the environment for 30 years.