

Great Lakes Clean-up: Canada falls behind

A commentary by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy

Watford Guide-Advocates

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While U.S environmental groups and public officials were meeting in Washington to discuss progress on cleaning up the Great Lakes, Canada continues to fail to live up to agreements signed as far back as 1994 when the Canada-Ontario Agreement was signed. It committed Canada and Ontario to restore degraded areas identified in 17 “Areas of Concern” in Ontario.

Since then, only 2 of the 17 have been restored. Federal funds for this work have been reduced, Remedial Action Plan coordinators have been laid off, funding for Public Advisory Committees has been cut and site monitoring has been severely reduced.

“Canada is often seen as a world leader on environmental issues,” said Anne Mitchell, Executive Director, Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy. “However our government’s lack of support to seriously tackle the problem of cleaning up the Great Lakes is a national embarrassment.”

“Problems in the Great Lakes are only growing worse,” continued Mitchell. “If we are to preserve the lakes to protect our drinking water and fresh water fisheries, we must act quickly before it is too late.”

On “Great Lakes Day” in Washington Members of Congress, government officials and environmentalists met to discuss ways to improve the health of the Great Lakes.

“It is encouraging that politicians in the United States are actively engaged in helping to ensure the lakes are protected,” said Mitchell. “Hopefully Canadian and Ontario elected representatives will follow this lead and become engaged.” CIELAP calls on the Canadian and Ontario governments to immediately: Restore funding to clean up the remaining 15 Areas of Concern in Ontario, Hire Remedial Action Plan Coordinators to move the process forward, Restore monitoring, Convene a gathering of elected politicians, government officials and stakeholders to revitalize the Great Lakes clean up effort.

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

