

Funding sought for cleanup of St.Mary's

The Sault Star

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The federal government's environmental committee is being urged to restore funding to clean up 15 degraded waterways, including St. Mary's River. The executive director of the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy made the pitch Wednesday before the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, in Ottawa.

Anne Mitchell said only two of the 17 "areas of concern" on the Great Lakes- St Lawrence Seaway have been delisted since the binational Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement was signed in 1972.

That agreement pledged to control pollution and clean up waste water from industry and communities.

But since then, federal funding and site monitoring have been reduced and remedial action plan co-ordinators have been laid off. Canada's lack of government support these last 32 years is a "national embarrassment," Mitchell said.

"We have not been successful because our approach has been curative and not preventative," she said in her presentation.

"While it is important to clean up the mess we have already created, it is a smarter idea to take preventative steps to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem in view of the impending threat to the emergence of invasive species, new chemicals and climate change implications."

She said Ottawa must make restoration of the Great Lakes-St Lawrence ecosystem "a national priority. This will be possible by adopting a targeted and proactive approach towards Great Lakes restoration, emphasizing public education and information and increasing transparency in the approach, monitoring and evaluation."

CIELAP also called on the Canadian and Ontario governments to:

- Restore funding to clean up the remaining 15 areas of concern on the Canadian side of the border
- Hire remedial action plan co-ordinators
- Restore public monitoring and funding for public advisory committees
- Regulate the withdrawal of water from the Great Lakes
- Regulate pollution prevention plans for industrial discharges to wastewater treatment plants.