

Harbour among areas needing help, MPs told

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Port Hope's harbour is among areas of concern on the Great Lakes that were discussed on Parliament Hill recently.

Anne Mitchell, executive director of the Canadian Institute of Environmental Law and Policy, was heard by several members of Parliament- particularly those who sit on the Federal Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development—that a number of the great lakes need to be cleaned up.

“We depend on that water for our drinking and for our livelihood,” she said.

The federal government's lack of support to seriously tackle the problem of cleaning up the Great Lakes is a “national embarrassment,” Ms. Mitchell said.

In 1984, Canada and Ontario signed an agreement to restore degraded areas identified in 17 “Areas of Concern” in Ontario. Only two have since been restored.

Port Hope's harbour is included in the Areas of Concern that MPs heard about this week.

Ms Mitchell said she felt the audience genuinely cared about what she said during her two hour talk. “I certainly felt that there were listening and that they were concerned. They were all very interested and concerned and seemed prepared to work with us.”

Ms. Mitchell and her group are calling on the federal and provincial governments to immediately restore funding for the work that had been reduced, hire action plan co-ordinators, regulate the withdrawal of water from the Great Lakes, require pollution prevention plans for industrial discharges to waste water treatment plants, restore monitoring, and convene a gathering of elected politicians, government officials and stakeholders to revitalize the Great Lakes clean-up effort.

While MPs who heard Ms. Mitchell suggested new funds may be available through the federal Ministry of Infrastructure for clean-up efforts, they said some initiative would need to come from the municipal level of government in order to obtain them.

Other Areas of Concern on the Great Lakes include Thunder Bay, Nipigon Bay, Peninsula Harbour, Spanish River, Wheatley Harbour, Hamilton Harbour, Metro Toronto Region, Bay of Quinte, St. Mary's River, St. Clair River, Detroit River, Niagara River and the St. Lawrence River.

