

## **“Real Time” water quality monitors called for in St. Clair River**

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Bev Shipley is calling for the installation of “real time” water quality monitors in the St. Clair River.

The Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MP says a portion of the \$3.3 million Ottawa has earmarked for the cleanup of sediments in the international waterway should be used to pay for such equipment.

The federal government announced it was making the money available to the provincial government on the weekend.

Real time monitors measure pollution levels quickly, making it unnecessary to send samples away to laboratories for analysis.

As it stands now, there’s only one monitor on the Canadian side of the river. Located at Courtright, it’s owned and operated by the industry-funded Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA).

SLEA general manager Dean Edwardson said if the existing monitor detects a problem in the river, the information is quickly passed on to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

His organization’s monitor “is virtually real time,” Edwardson said. “With the instrumentation we have we can do it (testing) on site.” In fact, water quality results can usually be obtained in a couple of hours, he said.

Officials in downriver communities in both Ontario and Michigan have repeatedly called for more monitors to be installed on the Canadian side of the St. Clair.

“My constituents in Wallaceburg and Walpole Island have spoken clearly about the need for these monitors,” Shipley said.

Although the money announced on the weekend is for sediment cleanup, Shipley noted Queen’s Park has the authority to spend some of it on monitors.

The Conservative MP also called on the province and local municipalities to match the federal commitment.

“It would be my hope this funding would serve as an incentive to other levels of government who traditionally support capital projects on a one-third basis,” he said.

But Terry Burrell, a Sarnia member of the Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC), which is looking for solutions to St. Clair River pollution, says he’d rather see the grant spent on cleanup efforts.

“If the federal government would be willing to pay for them it would be fine,” Burrell said. “But I would not support (spending municipal funds on monitors). I feel we do sufficient monitoring of our side now.”

Kris Lee, a member of WATCH, a Wallaceburg-area environmental watchdog organization, supports Shipley’s position.

She said government monitors could be valuable backups to the SLEA equipment.

“There could be marine spills from a tanker or cargo ship, or even a motor boat” that the SLEA monitor doesn’t check for, she said.