

Clean and healthy (Sarnia Observer Editorial)

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For too long now it's been assumed that we can't have a clean environment and a healthy economy. But there's growing evidence that we can not only protect our air and water, money can be made doing it.

The solar and wind projects popping up in Sarnia-Lambton are good examples of that.

And now there's more proof.

It comes from a group of local people striving to clean up the Great Lakes.

In Sarnia, a volunteer organization called Friends of the St. Clair held a press conference last week to talk about protecting the lakes. At that event, it was said the price tag to clean up the lakes could hit \$26 billion.

But the return on that investment could be a staggering \$75 billion, according to Archie Kerr, a member of the Friends of the St. Clair.

"That is based on improved commercial fishing, increased tourism and all the other benefits of having a clean water supply," he said.

Unlike some officials, Kerr sounded an upbeat message.

"Industry and government have come a long way in cleaning up the river," he said.

Kerr believes the St. Clair can be taken off a list of toxic hot spots in the Great Lakes basin within a decade. If that happens, it will be good not just for the environment, but for our economy.

It will certainly help tourism. But more than that, it will go a long way toward cleaning up our image. That, in turn, will help us attract people and investors who may be shying away from Sarnia-Lambton because of its reputation as a pollution hotspot.