

Feb 23, 2008 10:10 ET

## Government of Canada Takes Action to Clean Up the St. Clair River: Davidson and Baird Deliver for Sarnia-Lambton

SARNIA, ONTARIO--(Marketwire - Feb. 23, 2008) - Canada's Environment Minister, John Baird, and Pat Davidson, Member of Parliament for Sarnia-Lambton, announced today that the Government of Canada is investing up to \$3.3 million to clean up the St. Clair River.

"Our Government recognizes the need for action to protect and improve the health of Canada's freshwater," said Minister Baird. "Cleaning up contaminated sediment from waterways such as the St. Clair River is good for our communities, our families, and our environment."

Together with the Province of Ontario and in consultation with local stakeholders, the Government of Canada will develop a sediment management strategy for the site. Remedial options could include capping and/or dredging, disposal of contaminated sediment and long-term monitoring. The clean-up project will begin in 2010 and be completed by 2012.

"Cleaning up the St. Clair River will benefit not only ecosystem health but also the economies of local communities, including Sarnia and Walpole Island," said Mrs. Davidson. "Together with our local stakeholders, we are working to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for the nearly 170,000 citizens in this area, most of whom rely on the river for drinking water."

This major investment to clean up the St. Clair River is part of the Government of Canada's Action Plan for Clean Water. Recently, the Government has also taken action to protect water quality, including tough new regulations against the dumping of raw sewage and improving raw sewage treatment in municipalities and First Nation communities across Canada. These measures will help filter out substances like phosphates, which can lead to excessive blue-green algae production.

A backgrounder on the St. Clair River clean-up project is available at: [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

### BACKGROUNDER

#### CLEANING UP THE ST. CLAIR RIVER - PART OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S ACTION PLAN FOR CLEAN WATER

With an investment of up to \$3.3 million, our Government is taking real action to clean up a severely contaminated site within the Great Lakes, the St. Clair River. Through this commitment, the Government of Canada is addressing the principal sediment challenge facing the St. Clair River Area of Concern, the remediation of contaminated sediment in two known zones, offshore from the Sarnia Industrial Complex.

The St. Clair River Area of Concern extends 64 kilometres from Lake Huron to Lake St. Clair and includes the St. Clair Flats from St. John's Marsh in the west, to the southern tip of Seaway Island, and east to the north shore of Mitchell's Bay on Lake St. Clair. The River and its watersheds cover over 335,000 hectares and are home to over 170,000 people, many of whom rely on the river for drinking water.

Studies have identified contaminated sediment issues causing biological impacts to three priority zones within a 12-kilometre stretch downstream of the Sarnia industrial complex. One of the contaminated zones has been cleaned up by the local industry, Dow Chemical Canada.

The Governments of Canada and Ontario will develop a sediment management strategy in consultation with local stakeholders in 2008. This will be followed by an assessment of remedial options and further consultation with local stakeholders as required, to determine the preferred option for remediation. Remedial measures could include capping and/or dredging, disposal of contaminated sediment and long-term monitoring. We expect to begin necessary clean-up actions in 2010, completing them in 2012.

Areas of Concern are severely degraded geographic areas within the Great Lakes Basin. Restoring environmental quality is a priority due to their impact on local and basin-wide ecosystem health. In August 2007, the governments of Canada and Ontario announced the 2007 Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. The Agreement focuses on cleaning up the remaining 15 Canadian Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes. The St. Clair River Area of Concern clean up is part of the Government of Canada's Action Plan for Clean Water and its goal of ensuring that all Canadians have access to clean, safe and healthy water.