

# Pressure mounts for lakes' cleanup

## EARTH VOYAGER STOPS IN SARNIA TO MAKE CASE FOR ANTI-POLLUTION FUNDING

BY CATHY DOBSON, THE OBSERVER

Billions of dollars are needed to clean up and protect the Great Lakes and Janice Littlefield is determined to find them.

The Port Huron resident is a driving force behind a 13-city tour of Earth Voyager, an impressive 60-foot trimaran that docked in Centennial Park Tuesday.

Sarnia was the only confirmed Canadian stop on the tour as the sailboat is concentrating on U. S. destinations, where signatures are being collected to lobby the presidential candidates.

"It's all about finding the funding," said Littlefield, who is co-chairperson of the Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC).

A 2007 study released by the Brookings Institute in Washington D. C. pegged the price of cleaning up the Great Lakes at \$26 billion, she said.

That money is needed for everything from sediment remediation and habitat restoration to municipal sewer separation.

At each American stop the Earth Voyager makes this summer, people are being asked to sign postcards appealing for the presidential candidates to commit to funding.

"We're going to deliver them in big sacks and we're going to have a lot of them. The response has been awesome," Littlefield said.

Mobilizing Americans and Canadians to care about water quality in the Great Lakes and apply pressure on their politicians is no easy task, according to Littlefield.

"It's really hard to get people's attention so we're using the Earth Voyager, which is really unusual-looking. People come down to see it and end up talking to us about water."

In Sarnia, a volunteer group called Friends of the St. Clair welcomed the Earth Voyager and held a press conference to talk about cleaning up the Great Lakes.

The return on the \$26-billion price tag to clean up the lakes is estimated at \$75 billion, said 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.

Years ago, the International Joint Commission identified 43 areas of concern in the Great Lakes, including the St. Clair River. To ensure public involvement in the cleanup, 43 BPACs were created to act as advisers. In Sarnia/Port Huron, an International BPAC has worked with government and industry for decades and made some inroads, Littlefield said.

"But much more needs to be done."

The Friends of the St. Clair have taken on the role of public education and some habitat restoration, Kerr said.

"Industry and government have come a long way in cleaning up the river. It's not moving as quickly as we'd like to see, but more progress has been made in the last few years.

"I'd like to say that delisting should occur in 10 years, depending on how much money is made available," Kerr said. Millions of federal, provincial and municipal dollars are being spent now to separate sewers, clean up river bottom sediment and protect the fisheries but more needs to be done, said Kerr.

His organization is focused on avoiding beach closures, restoring aquatic habitat and addressing how much fish can safely be eaten without fear of mercury poisoning.

Mayor Mike Bradley, St. Clair Township Mayor Steve Arnold, MP Pat Davidson and MPP Bob Bailey attended the press conference to welcome the Earth Voyager, each agreeing progress is being made but there's a long way to go to protect the Great Lakes.

Each politician presented Earth Voyager Capt. Wayne Jurs with flags and pins and said public awareness is an important aspect of protecting the Great Lakes.