

Gaining provincial support in fight against Phragmites

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The Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group is urging the provincial government to put forth funds to aid in the group's battle against the invasive reed that occupies the region's wetlands. Phragmites is a perennial grass spreading like wildfire, causing severe damage to coastal wetland and beaches in North America.

Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MPP Monte McNaughton accepted an invitation from the Chair of the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group Nancy Vidler to witness first-hand the devastation the invasive reed causes to the area's wetlands, affecting the natural habitat of native species, taking over and destroying the natural heritage. McNaughton toured the Phragmites-dense wetland near Kettle and Stony Point on the Lake Huron shoreline on Thursday, May 23 as a passenger in a tracked vehicle operated by Habitat Restoration Specialist Frank Letourneau.

Wetland Ecologist Janice Gilbert has 18 years of experience studying and assess-

ing freshwater wetlands and over the past seven years has focussed on Great Lakes coastal wetlands and impacts and control of Phragmites. Gilbert says a large amount of wildlife habitat is being lost and a tremendous amount of Ontario's wetlands has already been lost. "This is my biggest concern," she adds.

Gilbert was on site Thursday. She was hired by the Municipality of Lambton Shores to create a five-year-plan that will deal with the management of Phragmites within the municipality. Vidler says the municipal level has been

supportive and is a model to other municipalities. Deputy Mayor Elizabeth Davis-Dagg and Councillor Lorie Scott were also on site.

"We can't bury our heads," Vidler told McNaughton. "Ontario needs to provide funding for a co-ordinated effort to battle Phragmites across the province." The Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group has had to track down thousands of dollars on its own to fund remediation work.

Although the province labeled the wetland toured on Thursday a significant site and labeled the protection of coastal

wetlands a priority, Vidler says they're not doing enough to help the fight.

McNaughton recognizes the issue and says it needs to be dealt with as soon as possible. Vidler's passion and ongoing persistence to build awareness and funding of the extensive problem of Phragmites earned the group the possibility of an invitation to Queen's Park, where McNaughton says it's important for Vidler to address and educate the Minister of Natural Resources.

Vidler and Gilbert continue to brainstorm ideas of ways eradicate Phragmites.



Lambton-Kent-Middlesex PC MPP Monte McNaughton shows provincial support in the eradication of the invasive reed, Phragmites that is spreading like wildfire over the Great Lakes wetlands. On Thursday, May 23 McNaughton toured the Phragmites-dense wetland near Kettle and Stony Point. Shown in photo, from left, is St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Conservation Services Specialist Steve Shaw, Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group Chair Nancy Vidler, Lambton Shores Deputy Mayor Elizabeth Davis-Dagg, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MPP Monte McNaughton, Lambton Shores Councillor Lorie Scott and Habitat Restoration Specialist Frank Letourneau. Photo by Kimberly Powell-McConaghy