

## Great Lakes Congressional Staff Visit

While the overall aim of this visit was to indicate the high priority that Canada gives to the protection of the Great Lakes, there was a special emphasis on air quality issues as well as showing successful remedial action plans such as the Hamilton Harbour clean-up. The visit took place from November 20 to 22, 1996 in several sites along the Great Lakes: Toronto, Burlington, Hamilton, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Niagara Falls. The program included a variety of formats: briefings in boardrooms overlooking the Great Lakes, laboratory tours, walks along the Great Lakes and special meal functions. A copy of the agenda is attached.

Nine staffers from the offices of Great Lakes Members of Congress participated in this visit along with Sheila Tooze of the Canadian Embassy and Susan Nameth of Environment Canada. The costs for Sheila Tooze were paid from the contribution agreement while Environment Canada paid the costs for Susan Nameth other than meals included in the program.

There was a good political and geographic balance among the nine staffers: four Senate and five House; four Republican and five Democrat; four Michigan, three Ohio, one Minnesota and one from Great Lakes Task Force. Unfortunately, the dates selected for the visit were not convenient for staffers from the offices of New York legislators.

The Centre enjoys a reputation for organizing visits that cover a variety of issues, move along efficiently, are well-balanced and include diversity of viewpoints and approaches. This exposure to a variety of players and their views is one of the cornerstones for clearance by the Ethics Committees.

The visit began with an overview presentation by Glen Bailey, Director of the U.S. Relations Division on the close, interdependent economic relationship between Canada and the United States. It helped to set the stage for subsequent sessions by emphasizing that although both countries share common goals, they have taken quite different approaches to achieving these goals. Throughout the discussion period in other sessions, participants often referred to comments made by Glen Bailey. The printed material distributed in this opening session was also a useful reference tool that will likely be used by participants in the future.

This session also helped to initiate informal discussions throughout the visit about the Canadian legislative system, the work of MPs and the activities of constituency offices. While some general background documents comparing the two systems of government had been included in the briefing documents, the Centre did not arrange a separate session on this subject. Rather, the director who has worked on Parliament Hill for some 23 years and is the author of several booklets on MPs'