

# Dow cleanup going well

## RIVER BOTTOM PROJECT TO COST \$10 MILLION

By GEORGE MATHEWSON  
The Observer

A vacuum cleaner fit for a giant has begun the job of removing a major stain from the bottom of the St. Clair River.

Dow Chemical Canada, which used to discharge toxic compounds directly into the river, ended the second day of a \$10-million cleanup plan Wednesday encouraged by the results.

Water continued to run clear downstream from the dredging site. And there was no evidence that chlorine-based contaminants buried in the sediment had been released into the water column, Dow spokesperson Birgit Lacey said.

"Monitoring is showing no detectable amounts."

Just offshore from Dow, a barge, a crane and a tugboat were joined by several smaller boats and a monitoring vessel from the Ontario Environment Ministry.

Beneath the barge, contaminated sand and gravel was sucked up and carried through a large blue hose that snaked up a hill to a holding pond



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**Removing mercury and toxic chemicals dumped on the riverbed decades ago will cost Dow Chemical Canada an estimated \$10 million. A second phase of the project is expected to proceed from August to October.**

built specifically to accept the material.

About 40 people are involved in the cleanup, which uses a global positioning satellite system to guide the vacuum into place.

Dow has accepted responsibility for contaminating a 3,000-foot (915-metre) section of river decades ago with mercury and chlorine-based compounds, including one substance infamously described in the 1980s as "The Blob."

Critics have argued the pollutants, which lie in sediment

six inches to 24 inches deep, should be left undisturbed for fear they could reach downstream drinking water intakes.

But initial results from a small test area show the technology is doing the job safely, Lacey said.

"What we're finding is this method of removing the sediment doesn't stir up the bottom. The water is clear."

Should contamination readings exceed drinking water standards the dredging will cease immediately, Lacey said.

If all goes well, the pilot

project could be completed by the end of next week.

The sediment will be separated and the water treated. The dry material will be tested and treated, and ultimately buried in Dow's landfill.

The second phase, covering the largest portion of the site, could run from August to October.

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