

Publication: The Detroit News; Date: Dec 4, 2014; Section: Metro; Page: 9A

# Toledo mayor urges water quality action

## In congressional testimony, he calls for research, funding

**BY HOPE YEN Associated Press**

Washington — The mayor of Toledo, Ohio, is calling for the federal government's full attention to improve water quality in America's lakes and rivers, describing the toxic algae blooms that tainted his city's water supply this summer as a danger "doomed to be repeated."

Michael Collins appeared before the Senate Agriculture Committee on Wednesday for the first time after microcystin toxins in Lake Erie fouled the tap water for 400,000 people in Ohio and Michigan for two days in August.

He said the "full force" of the governments of the United States and Canada, along the level of an executive order, is needed to address what he described as an international problem. More than 80 percent of the water in Lake Erie comes from the Great Lakes via the Detroit River.

"Don't give this lip service. It's a canary in the coal mine," Collins said. "If we forget what happened in Toledo, it is doomed to be repeated."

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, who chairs the committee, called the Toledo water problems a "stark wake-up call" to the nation's crisis on water quality.

The water emergency that struck residents in parts of northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan put a spotlight on the lake's algae problem, which has been growing for more than a decade.

The mayor, a political independent, called on Congress to devote more research funding to more fully understand the causes, whether it's because of a new formulation of fertilizers or invasive species in the lake. The Environmental Protection Agency also should move quickly to set a federal water quality standard for algae blooms, he said.

He said agriculture runoff likely plays a role, but little else is known.

"Toxic algal blooms are not new, we have as a nation failed in studying the reasons why they continue and in taking steps to reduce or eliminate their occurrence," Collins said.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, urged officials to give Ohio access to \$13 million in federal grant money to implement conservation partnerships. "Ohio's Western Lake Erie Basin is a critical source of our state's drinking water and the lifeblood of our agricultural industry," he said.