



August 25, 2008

\$77M infrastructure windfall for Ottawa **Cash part of \$1.1B announcement for Ontario cities**

By AEDAN HELMER, SUN MEDIA

The city will receive \$77 million in funding as part of the province's \$1.1 billion investment in municipal infrastructure.

Premier Dalton McGuinty announced the windfall to a standing ovation from delegates at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's annual general meeting.

McGuinty said the investment, which will go to improving roads and bridges, public transit, social housing and other municipal projects, will create as many as 11,000 construction jobs in the short term.

The investment comes after the province passed the Investing in Ontario Act, which sets new parameters around doling out surplus dollars. Today's announcement centred around the release of the 2007-08 Public Accounts, which show a \$600 million surplus in the last fiscal year.

"We decided that, rather than have the entire surplus go towards the debt -- as was required under the old law -- we should have a new law that dedicates part of that surplus to a priority of our choosing," said McGuinty.

"This year, we chose Ontario municipalities -- not health care or education, although there's no shortage of demand there -- we chose you, our municipal partners."

How the money will be allocated in each community is up to municipal officials.

Mayor Larry O'Brien balked at the Premier's suggestion that the bulk of Ottawa's share be devoted to cleaning the Ottawa River after a massive sewage spill in the summer of 2006 rendered several city beaches unsafe.

"We have \$20 million committed already from the federal government and \$20 million from the city. I can't imagine we wouldn't be using at least a portion of this money to begin the solution of the Ottawa water problem," said O'Brien.

O'Brien said the city has "other critical infrastructure needs," such as the construction of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge.

"There may also be an opportunity for us to invest some money into technology infrastructure to reduce operating costs in the future," said O'Brien.

O'Brien said it would be up to council to decide how to best invest the money.

Ottawa West-Nepean MPP Jim Watson, who was also on hand for the announcement, said it was "unacceptable in the 21st century" to have raw sewage spilling into a major municipal waterway, but said Quebec would have to do its part in keeping the river clean as well.

As Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Watson also said he wanted to see investments in Ottawa's social housing programs.

Both O'Brien and McGuinty also congratulated Coun. Peter Hume, who succeeds Doug Reycraft as AMO president.

