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## A river runs through them City, federal politicians unite over problem waterway

By **SUSAN SHERRING**, CITY HALL BUREAU

There could be \$20 million on the table from the feds for the Ottawa River after a meeting between Environment Minister John Baird and Alta Vista Coun. Peter Hume yesterday.

The meeting, instigated by Baird, dealt with what the two levels of government can do together to help clean up the river.

"What I think we've agreed is to work in a co-operative partnership and work on the Ottawa River. We agree we need to be moving quickly and (the feds) are very keen to be part of the solution," Baird said, offering high praise to Hume and the city for the work done so far in finding a solution for pollution in the river.

"I'm actually surprised at how far he and the city have come," Baird said.

At today's planning and environment committee, councillors will talk about how to move forward on what needs to be done to get the best bang for the environmental buck.

The problems with raw sewage getting into the river first came under scrutiny last month after it was learned almost 1 million cubic metres of raw sewage leaked into the waterway undetected.

Several investigations are now ongoing and one city employee has been fired over the incident.

### UNITED SUPPORT

"The one thing, strangely, is that some good has come out of the spill," Baird said. "It's really galvanized the support. We need to strike while the iron is hot, infrastructure-wise. It won't happen overnight."

As chairman of the planning committee, Hume is quite likely the best-informed local politician on what is happening to the river.

He's pleased to have Baird offer his support and recognizes the rarity and importance of yesterday's meeting.

"I've been doing this for a while and I've never met with the federal minister of the environment on the Ottawa River," Hume said.

Both politicians accept the river's problems won't be dealt with in the short term.

"The big thing is, frankly, we didn't get into this overnight. We won't get out of it overnight," Baird said, adding it's become a huge issue of concern to residents of his riding in Nepean-Carleton.

"It was just a very positive meeting. I'm prepared to go to bat for federal money. This is a huge priority for us."