



August 7, 2008

## Sewer fix won't flow easily: Hume Separating systems not complete solution, he warns

By **SUSAN SHERRING**, CITY HALL BUREAU

There's no one quick fix to solving the pollution problems of the Ottawa River, warns Alta Vista Coun. Peter Hume.

Since a major spill in 2006 was uncovered earlier this year, attention has been focused on the downtown core's combined sewer system and its associated problems.

But Hume says he worries too much stock is being put on that one issue and residents shouldn't be lulled into thinking solving it is the panacea to all of the river's pollution problems.

### WESTBORO CLOSURES

The problems with frequent closures at Westboro Beach, for example, have nothing to do with spills or overflows from the combined sewer systems downtown, he said.

"I think we're painting all our issues with the same broad brush and it's not the same thing. The problems with Petrie being closed from high E. coli counts for example is very different than what's happening at Westboro, which (is closed) because of animal (feces) and stormwater waste," said Hume, chairman of the city's planning and environment committee.

In the downtown core, rainfall causes an overflow of sewage to get into the Ottawa River.

Where the system is separated, storm waste -- which is anything dumped on the roads or land, including everything from animal feces to cigarette butts and rain water -- can still find its way into the river.

"These are very different problems, with very different solutions and both have costly solutions. Once we solve the combined sewer overflow problem, there are many other issues we have to turn our attention to," Hume said.

Dixon Weir, the city's director of water and waste water services, concurs.

"The combined sewer systems are very important contributions to the problem, but they're not the only issue that needs to be looked at," Weir said.

### 'A REAL PROGRESSION'

While separated sewers prevent untreated sewage from getting into the river, storm water still makes its way there.

Weir explained there has been an evolution in thinking over the past few decades.

"It's been a real progression, one step at a time, and we started looking at the actual impact of separated sewers," he said.

And while the public appears to be clamouring for separation of the sewer system, that might not be the best approach.

"To suggest that we completely separate our sewer system, just may not be the most practical solution," said Weir.

