

Will minister dig deep for toxic reef?

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Canadian Environment Minister John Baird saw yesterday how much of the bottom of Hamilton Harbour is a dead zone -- covered by coal tar deposits so toxic nothing can live there.

Now he has to come up with \$30 million as the federal government's proposed share of the estimated \$90 million needed to clean up the contaminated sediment around Randle Reef.

After a boat tour of the water near Stelco Hamilton Steel, Baird told reporters: "It is not just a big issue for Hamilton and Burlington. It affects the Great Lakes, Lake Ontario, and the Great Lakes are a huge treasure for us. For too long we've treated them as dumping grounds."

Burlington MP Mike Wallace also took Baird to the Royal Botanical Gardens, which wants to have a greater national presence and educational role.

RBG spokesperson Sherry Houston said it wasn't making a pitch for federal help with its Gateway Gardens project; it already has that money.