



ROBERT HIRTLE PHOTO

Theresa E. Connor, flagship of the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg, is currently undergoing Phase 2 of a hull restoration project which was started in 2006.

Shipshape

Museum centrepiece begins second phase of refit

By **ROBERT HIRTLE**
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LUNENBURG — There's a vacant spot on the Lunenburg waterfront.

Last week the world's last original saltbank schooner, Theresa E. Connor, was towed from her berth at the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic to the slip at Lunenburg Industrial Foundry and Engineering Ltd. for the second phase of a refit that began three years ago.

"Back in 2006, we did a portion of the hull and the remainder has to be completed, so this is a continuation on of this project," explains museum general manager Angela Saunders. "At this point in time, we're not going to be able to do the entire hull, but we'll do basically the sections ... that gives us an opportunity to make sure she ties and secures well to the wharf."

She said this portion of the project, which is being carried out by a crew of craftsmen from Snyder's Shipyard in Dayspring, is expected to run in the neighbourhood of \$300,000. Despite the downturn in the economy, she is hoping additional funds will become available in the near future to complete the remainder of the work.

During her 2006 restoration, Theresa E. Connor was on the slip for about three months and Ms Saunders said they are likely looking at at least two months this time around.

"That all depends on what they find," she added.

Museum boat builder Cliff Zwicker said that work will be carried out on both sides of the ship.

"They're finishing the port side, from

where the new wood was [installed] three years ago, up to the stem, and they're going to do about 20 feet on the starboard side, which will include the knightheads and stuff like that, and we're doing the frames, of course, too," he explained. "They're tearing some of the planking off now to make sure there is no rotten wood in behind ... the stem. We're not sure what's in there."

He said early indications are there is a section of the stem about six feet to eight feet in length that is rotten and will require replacing "which we weren't counting on."

"It was just around the waterline so we couldn't tell," he added.

Ms Saunders says that once again, as in the 2006 refit, replacement timbers and planking will be made from white oak, a hardier wood than the red oak that was used previously.

"We're hoping that it gives her a very long lifespan," she added.

Despite turning 70 years of age last summer, the ship still has some original woodwork remaining in her hull, probably preserved by the salt that was used to preserve fish that was stored in the hold.

It is one more aspect of the Theresa E. Connor that adds to the authenticity of the last bastion of a way of life that disappeared from the Lunenburg waterfront over four decades ago.

"She's more than an exhibit here. She's probably our most visited portion of this entire facility," Ms Saunders said.

"She's a main draw for us and we've had wonderful support in keeping her maintained."

Water rates may rise

Mahone Bay hopes to hike fees as of April 1

By **LISA BROWN**
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MAHONE BAY — Residents of Mahone Bay could be looking at some hefty increases on their water bills.

The town is applying to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (URB) for rate changes beginning April 1. If approved as requested, water rates for the average household customer will go up 70 per cent this year, another 9.4 per cent in 2010 and a further four per cent in 2011.

"When you hear 70 per cent, it's a scary number and I really appreciate that," Mayor Joe Feeney says. "I don't think anybody is going to be necessarily happy about the fact that the increase is as big as it is, but it's not a crippling number in terms of actual dollars."

The utility currently has 439 customers with the average household paying \$68.73 every two months for water. With the new rates, that figure would rise to \$117.02 the first year, \$127.97 the second and \$133.14 the third.

Gerry Isenor of G.A. Isenor Consulting Limited reviewed the results of the latest water rate study with town council January 16. His is one of two consulting firms hired to complete the study and present it to the URB on the town's behalf.

According to Mr. Isenor's figures, the water utility will have a deficit of more than \$264,000 by the end of the current fiscal year. Without rate increases, that number is projected to grow to more

than \$403,000 next year and reach nearly \$580,000 the year after that.

As part of the study, officials are asking the URB to allow the town to receive a return from the utility beginning in 2010-11. That first year, the amount would be \$30,000. The following year, councillors opted to bump it to \$40,000.

The town will use the return to pay down the utility's deficit.

"I think we need to be aggressive in paying off the debt as fast as we can," Deputy Mayor Dave Devenne said, speaking in favour of the higher figure.

The plan also includes built-in increases for operating expenses at three per cent per year, a figure Mr. Isenor said is quite typical. Some expenses rise more than that, some less, but overall, he indicated, it's a reasonable number which should keep the deficit from growing.

After spending over an hour reviewing the study, councillors concluded they have no option but to try to increase rates.

"It has to be done. We can't exist the way we're going," Councillor Karl Nauss said. Officials pointed out that the increases shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone in the town who has been listening. This council and the one that came before it have repeatedly warned residents that water rates would have to climb to pay for the new water treatment plant.

"They know it's going to happen," Councillor Lila O'Connor said. The URB will likely schedule a hearing on the town's application in the next two months.

Permanent skate park proposed near lifestyle centre site

By **KEITH CORCORAN**
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BRIDGEWATER — Land neighbouring the future site of a new regional recreation centre could be the permanent home of a skateboard park.

The town raised the possibility last week, saying a place in the business park away from homes but within good distance of both high schools could be a better choice. The Bridgewater Development Association's skateboard committee has \$20,000 to help pay for installing an asphalt surface. The town could chip in with constructing a driveway, while the job of clearing and grubbing would have to be contracted out. The land also may have to be rezoned. The association owns the land next to the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre site.

"We could get going in some sort of manner," said Mayor Carroll Publicover. "They have some money and the town will be asked to contribute some money to make it a reality but I personally believe it's a better site."

The location also holds the potential to host BMX bikers as well. Association manager Ida Scott said once a permanent location is found, corporate fundraising can happen to help pay for add-ons to the park. Although the association supports the idea in principle, skateboarders still need to be consulted.

"They're anxious for us to get something [permanent] anyhow," Ms Scott said. "We're very hopeful something will be in place this summer. Starting in the spring is where we're aiming."

The park was to be in the master plan of the 18 acres of designated recreational space near Glen Allan Drive's HB Studios Sports Centre but it's thought putting it in a less residential area is a better idea. It also prevents project delays since the master plan isn't finished yet.

"Boarders have been using the ramps at a temporary park at the corner of Exhibition Drive and Dufferin Street for the last three years.

They were close to securing land on north King Street in 2006 but the prospect was scrapped when neighbours objected.

Arena chiller price tag: \$42,488

By **KEITH CORCORAN**
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BRIDGEWATER — Refrigeration specialists Fixair bid successfully to replace the chiller in the Bridgewater Memorial Arena.

The company, which has offices in Dartmouth and Montreal, Quebec, will supply the custom-made equipment to the arena's refrigeration plant at a cost of \$42,488. There was one other quote for the job.

Town council last week passed a motion awarding the quote to the company.

Recreation director Carol Pickings-Anthony told council on at least two occasions that there were no guarantees the equipment, because of its age, would last the rest of this season.

Workers patched a damaged tube in the chiller late last year. The arena was scheduled to close the first week in December to take care of the equipment

problem but the situation became worse in November and forced the closure to happen sooner. The shutdown impacted mostly public skates and the minor hockey schedule.

The rink's financial story hasn't been a cheap tale as of late.

Prior to Christmas the town agreed to spend up to \$60,000 to replace the arena's ammonia-leaking condenser. Described as a small leak, the facilities manager suspects the cause is linked to corrosion.

Audio experts last year tested voice-over sound quality of the public address system after complaints were received from rink-goers who felt it was not working properly or not working at all.

A building audit of the rink completed by a consulting firm for the town in 2002 gives approximate timelines of when equipment is due for replacement.

The report states the condenser was due for replacement in 2003, while the brine chiller's time was up in 2008.