

■ **PORT OF PRESCOTT:** Phase one of \$35-million upgrade to begin soon

Wharf work to begin

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SPENCERVILLE — Finally!

What could well be the jewel in the crown from the nearly \$80 million in stimulus funding that flowed to Leeds and Grenville to combat a global recession began to take shape Monday.

During a special meeting of Edwardsburgh-Cardinal council, a \$14.8-million tender was awarded to Montreal's Pomerleau Construction for the first phase of construction in a \$35-million terminal upgrade at the Port of Prescott near Johnstown.

Cost of the project is shared equally by the federal, provincial and municipal government and work is expected to start this fall.

The Port of Prescott's growing grain-handling business has already made the township council of the day's \$60 purchase of the facility from the federal government in 2000 look like a stroke of genius.

But with a new wharf will come new opportunities for the benefit of the immediate area, as well as more broadly throughout eastern Ontario, officials said during a media session after the council meeting where an image of the port with the new "riverfront wharf" on the west side of the grain elevator was unveiled.

"Once we get it built, we will fill it with product, no question about it," project coordinator Bob Hennessey, who is also a former manager at the port, told The Recorder and Times.

Hennessey said "it was a gutsy move" by the township when it initially purchased the port and he feels the same about the efforts of subsequent councils to keep it going.

It is not without risk, he added, noting the township is putting up more than \$10 million to fund the work.

Hennessey's successor as port manager, Robert Dalley, was also sure the improvements will bring in new business.

He said the existing riverfront



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Edwardsburgh-Cardinal Mayor Bill Sloan, left, points to the image of a proposed new wharf for the Port of Prescott while port manager Robert Dalley looks on Monday. Township council awarded a construction tender to begin development of a \$34.5-million wharf upgrade.

wharf is too small to handle much payload, while the harbour-side wharf has badly deteriorated and can only accommodate a limited amount of material, normally a salt pile.

He said additional salt storage along with all sorts of other products — including containers — will also be accommodated and he expects demand to flow once the facility is up and running.

For instance, the port would be able to handle wind turbine parts destined for Howe Island, that a few years ago were instead stored at the Port of Ogdensburg, said Dalley.

"Once we build it, the new products will come."

Dalley said the proximity of the port was one reason Green-

field Ethanol chose to build a refinery across the road from the grain elevator, where an ample supply of corn could be maintained.

Similarly, a separate \$5.5-million stimulus project to build four 20,000-tonne grain storage bins last year has also proven to be a sound decision, he said.

The bins were quickly filled during harvest season and helped the port, which has a total capacity for grain of 145,000 metric tonnes, to avoid becoming plugged with product like the two previous years, he said.

Township Mayor Bill Sloan, who was deputy reeve of the council which purchased the port in 2000, said the improvements will benefit the entire region by providing an outlet for

products destined for local or global markets.

"The potential is unlimited," said Sloan, who noted a groundbreaking ceremony will be held later to recognize all the people involved in getting the project off the ground, including Leeds-Grenville MP Gord Brown, who the mayor said was a important champion for the project.

"We really appreciate all the hard work that everyone put into this," said Sloan.

Deputy Mayor John Hunter said as a farmer, he is thankful for the port's positive impact on the grain industry in Eastern Ontario and western Quebec, and he expects the new development will pay additional dividends.

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Two ships will berth at same time on new dock

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Project designer Ray Gaudreault has been involved in the development of similar projects in Sept Iles, Que., Prince Rupert, B.C. and elsewhere in Canada, and he said economic development will surely follow at the Port of Prescott like it did at the other locations.

"It never fails," he said during an interview.

Gaudreault is also familiar with Pommerleau Construction and said their work is of the highest quality.

Phase one of the project will extend the riverfront wharf 340 meters into the St. Lawrence River to permit two ships to berth simultaneously.

Additional cargo space will also be available to handle more materials being unloaded.

The long-awaited news has taken some time to come to fruition because of the various levels of approval required at both the federal and provincial levels.

Work had been projected to begin each of the past two years, but was put off until additional environmental concerns were addressed.

The provincial government signed off during 2010 and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans gave its final approval August 29, allowing for the bidding process to start.

Mayor Sloan thanked the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne for its support of the project, as well as that received from South Nation Conservation.

SNC general manager Dennis O'Grady said during an interview that the development will contain salt spills and encourage the growth of the muskie population after the removal of some cattail marshes.

O'Grady also had high praise for the municipality and its past and current councils for having the courage to develop a facility that had been a money-losing venture for the federal government.

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