

# Loading upgrade will help keep port competitive

The increased loading capacity will complement the Port of Prescott's new grain storage added in 2010

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**J**ohnstown – The first phase of a \$35 million upgrade to the only deep water port between Montreal and Toronto has been tendered, with work to be completed next March.

The project will permit the busy municipally owned Port of Prescott to handle more freighter cargo more rapidly, and perhaps deal with merchandise it's not now equipped to process such as wind turbine components.

"This is definitely going to pave the way for more business as we're currently fairly rigid as to what we can accept at the port," said manager Robert Dalley.

Edwardsburgh/Cardinal Township bought the port and grain elevator from the federal government a decade ago and has been operating it profitably ever since.

Profits have not only sustained the business but also demonstrated the feasibility of undertaking a project of the magnitude in question, Dalley said.

The port is recognized as an important economic generator across the region, providing jobs, sparking devel-



The wharf at the Port of Prescott was crumbling, but an upgrade should help fix that problem

opment and other spinoffs. Its elevator is the central corn storage and transfer station in Eastern Ontario.

Last year, growing demand led to installation of four new 20,000-tonne grain bins worth \$5.5 million. The presence of the port is one of the main reasons GreenField Ethanol located a refinery directly across from it.

The main wharf and related structures were about 70 years old at the time the township acquired them and were deteriorating. The upgrade funding was cobbled together after the township's port management board went public with news the wharf was crumbling and money had to be found to restore safety and efficiency.

With its retaining wall buckling, the wharf's steel supports have been corroded by shiploads of road salt – an average of 300,000 tonnes a year – dumped on it before being hauled to municipalities all over the east end of the province.

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## Prescott

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Components of the restoration project are designed to contain the salt which the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Committee has worried on more than one occasion is spilling into the St. Lawrence.

Phase one of the project, worth just under \$14.8 million, has been awarded to Pomerleau Construction of Montreal. It was the lowest of eight bids received. Two more phases are expected to be finished by the fall of 2015.

Consisting of 12 stone-filled cells, phase one encompasses extension of the dock by 340 metres permitting two ships

to berth while providing additional space for cargo handling.

The marine terminal revamping was announced early in 2009 as part of a tri-government Build Canada stimulus funding. At the time, construction was expected to begin in about 60 days.

Then came what has been described as an "extensive, cross-jurisdiction approval

process" which often threatened to sink the project, mostly over fish, turtle and other wildlife habitat issues. The project was held up for two years.

Edwardsburgh/Cardinal Mayor Bill Sloan said there was never any question the township was serious about completing the project in an "environmentally responsible manner".