

Wood harvesting proposal for watershed area raises concerns for elected representatives, environmentalists

KEITH CORCORAN

Local government politicians and environmental stewards are concerned about proposed Crown land wood harvesting within a protected area where Bridgewater gets its drinking water supply and is one of few homes to the endangered Atlantic whitefish.

A consortium of forest companies tasked with managing Crown land in the western end of the province wants to cut wood in a 49-hectare lot of provinciallyowned land near Minamkeak Lake in Lapland, Lunenburg County. The lake is one of three in what's known as the Petite Riviere watershed where the last remaining whitefish species can be found.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

BY JEFF ROGERS

Hello, everyone.

Due do logistical reasons, the board of directors has decided to cancel the online training seminar, which was scheduled for May 10 and 11. We are taking all of our efforts and putting them into the 2023 in-person seminar in Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Be on the lookout for in-person training opportunities Tim Henman, our training co-ordinator, has been working on with a number of different providers to get courses scheduled. There are lots of irons in the fire. Stay Safe. Brooke Nodding, executive director of Coastal Action, a local charity that has championed conservation and recovery efforts, isn't thrilled with the harvesting plan, which hasn't yet been authorized.

"Any cutting in this watershed has the potential to impact water quality of those lakes," Nodding told Lighthouse-NOW in an email, noting Minamkeak as "being the only last refuge free from invasive species."

"Also concerning is that this area has been identified as possible critical habitat for the Eastern ribbonsnake. Any forestry activities in this watershed could impact this listed species as well," Nodding said.

Bridgewater's Public Service Commission operates the town's water utility. Commission chairperson Andrew Tanner, who's also the town's deputy mayor, said the agency wants to know more.

"We're not content with what's proposed there; we definitely want more input into the process," Tanner said in a phone interview. The consensus is "it's not a good idea" to harvest wood in the area but, Tanner said, the commission has to work with the province, which owns the land in question.

The commission raised concerns in the past about mining and gravel pit operations. Bridgewater's mayor, David Mitchell, said the risks, if something goes wrong with the cutting, could be substantial.

"This is our source of clean drinking water, so any and all activity that happens in that watershed has to happen safely and we have to make sure it's not going to have a negative impact on the water, on the ecosystem," Mitchell explained.

Nova Scotia's Department of Natural Resources and Renewables' team of foresters, biologists, surveyors and technicians will review the harvest plan before any decisions are made. In an email, department spokesperson Steven Stewart said that wouldn't happen until after April 23, which was the deadline to submit public comments. Stewart said the team "considers adjacency to protected areas, wildlife habitat, municipal water supply areas and other values before a



(lan Manning photo, iNaturalist.ca)

harvest approval is granted."

The provincial government takes steps to protect and conserve biodiversity, including species at risk and a new recovery plan for the Atlantic whitefish was put in place last year and core habitat has been identified, Stewart added.

Continued on page 10



MEMBER PROFILE: Community health and safety top of mind for Leahy

RAISSA TETANISH

Operator name: Jennifer Leahy Operator title/position: Water Treatment Plant Operator, Small Systems

Q. Where do you work?

A I work for Halifax Water

Q. How long have you worked in the industry?

A. About three years.

Q. When did you join MPWWA and what are the advantages of being a member?

A. I just recently joined. There are some industry-related courses offered through the association, so there's a lot of extra knowledge and information you have access to. They also hold a conference every year that I hope to attend because it's a good opportunity to connect with people in the industry. As a new member, I'm still learning about the opportunities and benefits.

Q. What's the biggest challenge in your job?

A. Being the on-call operator for a week at a time each month, sometimes more. When I'm on call, I always need to be ready to respond to emergencies. This could be anything from a water main break to water quality issues within our systems. As the

Direct Responsible Charge (DRC) operator for Small Systems, I'm responsible for six small water treatment plants and nine re-chlorination stations. There are a lot of moving parts and opportunities to hone my problem-solving skills.

Q. What is your favourite part of the job?

A. The satisfaction I get from providing the essential service of clean drinking water to my community. I'm happy to contribute to the health of the people we serve.

Q. What is your least favourite part of the job?

A. Going out in the middle of the night is tough sometimes.

Q. How did you first become involved in the industry?

A. I got my Environmental Engineering Technology diploma at Nova Scotia Community College, which spurred my interest in water chemistry and treatment. My teachers were very knowledgeable and had an influence on me. One of them encouraged me to secure my previous position with the Department of National Defence.

Q. What's the least understood part of your job?

A. A lot of people don't know how much work goes into the drinking water that



Jennifer Leahy is a Small Systems water treatment plant operator for Halifax Water. (Submitted photo)

comes out of their tap. The process of getting from the lake or river to the customers requires expertise in many areas. The operation of a water treatment plant and the work involved in providing a consistent and clean supply is something the public doesn't always get to see.

Q. What else should the public know about what you do?

A. First and foremost, we have the health of our community in mind. Our intention as operators is always to provide the best water we can to the public.

Q. What's something everyone knows about you?

A. I love being in the outdoors - I'm connected to nature and invested in my work. Q. What's something almost no one

knows about you?

A. I've travelled to 16 countries outside of Canada and I speak a little bit of three languages

Q. What is your proudest professional accomplishment?

A. In November of 2021, I became a Certified Level II Water Treatment Operator as well as a Certified Engineering Technologist.

Q. What is your proudest personal accomplishment?

A. I planted a million trees over the course of a decade.

Q. What's your best advice to a fellow industry member, or someone looking to join the industry?

A. Study hard. It can be challenging to get into the industry at times but keep trying and keep learning bits and pieces of information wherever you can.

GREAT SERVICE



Stratford getting new water reservoir to handle expanded growth

ANDY WALKER

The largest town in P.E.I. will be getting a new 300,000 gallon water reservoir thanks to funding from the three levels of government.

The work will include the construction of the reservoir and the associated piping, valves and appurtenances alongside the existing water reservoir. Once complete, this project will ensure residents have improved and reliable access to potable water and keep pace with the commercial and residential development of the community. Ottawa will be providing \$320,270 towards the project, while the provincial will be providing \$266,870 and the municipality will contribute \$213,544.

In addition, financing was announced for clean renewable energy and reliable water infrastructure to the future Stratford Community Campus, a community hub that will boast recreational and cultural facilities along with other amenities. That work includes the construction of approximately 1,900 metres of sanitary sewer, a sewage pumping station, 2,200 metres of water distribution pipe, two stormwater detention ponds, as well as a 100 kilowatt solar array. The price tag for the site work at the campus will be split between \$2,328,430 federally, \$1,940,164 provincially and \$1,552,481 municipally.

Funding was also announced to restore the natural and structural capacity of Kelly's Pond watershed to mitigate the effects of increased rainfall and increased overland flooding. Ottawa will be contributing \$138,600 to that effort, along with \$115,488 from the province and \$92,412 from the town.

"Stratford is a growing, thriving community. The investments we are making today will ensure that it can continue growing into the future," Veterans Affairs Minister and Cardigan MP Lawrence MacAulay said in announcing the federal funding. "Our quality of life here on the island is second to none, and our government will continue working collaboratively with our provincial and municipal partners to build on that success."

The announcement also included funding for construction of an approximate 100 kilowatt ground-mounted, solar array with associated underground electrical work to set up a solar grip at the new community campus.

Residents will also benefit from a more than 4,800-metre trail system that



Transportation and Infrastructure Minister James Aylward, from left, with Stratford councillors Jill Burridge and Gail MacDonald, and Veterans Affairs Minister and Cardigan MP Lawrence MacAulay following the announcement of more than \$6 million in funding for the town that will go toward a new water reservoir and watershed upgrades.

(Submitted photo)

stretches through the community campus, creating connections to other active transportation links in the area, including connection points between Bunbury Road and Hollis Avenue. This addition to Stratford's active transportation system will help residents stay active while reducing carbon emissions.

"Working together, all three levels of governments, we are making investments that support the continued growth of our communities and the health and safety of our residents and environment," said Transportation and Infrastructure Minister James Aylward, who represents one of the town's two constituencies in the provincial legislature. "These projects will ensure adequate water supply for residents, help mitigate the potential impacts of climate change and plan for the realization of Stratford's Community Campus. We want to continue to revitalize our island communities, modernize our infrastructure, and build for a better tomorrow."

The Government of Canada is spending more than \$6 million in these projects through the Green Infrastructure Stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. The Government of Prince Edward Island is providing over \$5 million, while the Town of Stratford is contributing more than \$4 million.

"These projects are ones important to our growing community. Stratford is experiencing ongoing growth, which is only predicted to increase in the coming years, and the work which will be undertaken beginning this year with these projects will continue to help move us forward," said Stratford's deputy mayor, Gary Clow. "We thank our government partners for this funding, which is shared between all three levels of government and which will greatly benefit our residents upon completion of these projects."

Stratford plans almost \$3 million in capital work to water, sewer system

ANDY WALKER

The 2022-2023 budget for P.E.I.'s largest town includes funding to implement the inflow and infiltration reduction program to minimize the amount of water entering the sewer system that does not require treatment.

"Given that we are now pumping our sewage to Charlottetown, this work is even more important to complete and will reduce the amount of surface and groundwater seeping into the sewer system," Gail MacDonald, finance and technology chairperson for the Town of Stratford, said. "The utility continues to monitor and review the sewer system to identify areas that require attention and repairs. In 2021, we were able to rehabilitate 210 metres of sewer by using innovative technology where the existing pipe was lined through manhole access with no excavation required."

MacDonald said the lagoon was decommissioned last year and will be filled in this year with grass to create a town waterfront park. The utility has a \$2,977,100 capital budget for 2022-2023 that includes \$2,687,000 in water and sewer extensions and \$100,000 to help implement inflow infiltration study recommendations. The community has secured \$1,693,400 from the Investing in Canada Program for a net capital expenditure of \$1,283,700.

MacDonald noted the projects slated to be completed this year include an additional water reservoir in town to supply domestic and fire protection to the community and upgrading the Corish pump station and forecemain to redirect the Corish station flows away from the Pondside station into the gravity truck main. If funding is secured, upgrades will be done to the Bunbury sewage pumping station to accommodate current and future growth.



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Funding approved for well tests, repairs to storage tanks

JAKE BOUDROT

Municipal council has agreed to spend \$149,489.18 to conduct well tests and improve water infrastructure around Inverness County.

Municipal Special Projects facilitator Melanie Beaton spoke to Inverness Municipal Council in February about the operational pump test of the Whycocomagh water supply, which services approximately 125 connections in the village.

The system has two production wells (PW1 and PW2), both constructed in 1993, Beaton said. A constant rate pump test was conducted in April 1993 on PW1, but no such test was undertaken on PW2.

"Because only one well has been pumptested, our current withdrawal rate on our approval is only reflective of that one well, and as you can see, the municipality has consistently been in exceedance of our water withdrawal approval limit from Nova Scotia Environment (NSE). And if we don't rectify this non-compliance, they will begin to issue fines," Beaton told council.

Because of this, Beaton said the municipality purchased leak detection equipment

and trained staff. She said a leak detection program was conducted on fire hydrants and service connections.

"Minor leaks have been detected and repaired within the community of Whycocomagh," she confirmed.

Along with Strum Consulting, the municipality located and serviced the valves in the distribution system. The data was used to have Graham MacDonald of H20 Leaks provide staff with training on infield leak detection for valves.

Consultants with EXP Services Inc. provided the municipality with a proposal to conduct operational tests of the wellfield with both production wells pumping simultaneously, which Beaton said was then submitted to NSE for review, comment, and approval. She said the department reviewed the proposal and gave their approval.

"Basically requesting that the testing procedure be reviewed to ensure that the results of the proposed operational pump test are sufficient for submission to NSE to obtain a water withdrawal permit amendment for a higher pumping rate," Beaton noted.

Beaton estimated the work in Whycoco-



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magh will cost \$16,479.90.

As for testing of the Port Hood production wells, Beaton said that would use the GUDI (groundwater under the direct influence) system which, in this case, involves surface water. She said this entails a threestep process that can take from two to three years.

"It refers to situations where microbial pathogens can travel from surface water, through an aquafer, into water well," she explained.

After testing in Port Hood, Beaton said PW2 was experiencing reduced yield, and has since been decommissioned. Thanks to the reduced yield, as well as structural deterioration, the community was under a water conservation advisory.

"Due to a significant shortage of water, the municipality undertook an emergency exploratory wellfield development program in 2019, and identified a new well, PW3, which was successfully drilled and established in proximity to PW2," she noted. "But PW3 is provincially-mandated to undergo step 2 testing."

At a previous council meeting, Beaton said, "Based on staff considerations and consultation with many qualified consultants and contractors, drilling a replacement well in the vicinity of (PW2) was the only viable long-term option to achieve the yield necessary to provide the residents of Port Hood with a long-term and reliable production yield."

Beaton said the municipality was to conduct sampling, at a cost of \$8,103.44.

The community of Judique has been under multiple water boil order advisories in the past, and is home to the municipality's only surface water source, Beaton said.

During heavy rain and snow melt, Beaton said the water has been difficult to treat, leading to discolouration.

"The municipality has successfully been undertaking exploratory measures to replace the open water source in Judique with a groundwater source, which will require a smaller and more efficient treatment system," said Beaton. "A groundwater source in Judique will ensure that the municipality can resolve reoccurring drinking water advisories, provide access to safe, potable water, while enabling compliance with Nova Scotia Environment, and federal limits and criteria."

To date, Beaton said four production wells have been drilled, with PW1 and PW2 pump tested, and combined they can provide 50 per cent of the projected target yield to supply the community.

Beaton said municipal employees worked with a hydrogeologist on a 72hour pump test of PW3 and PW4.

"Based on the results of those pump tests, then we'll find out whether or not we achieved sufficient yields to be able to transfer the community of Judique from a surface water source to a groundwater source," noted Beaton.

EXP Services proposed deepening PW3 an additional 30 metres, in addition to the 114 metres it currently stands, Beaton told council.

Estimating all this work in Judique will cost a total of \$29,622.75, Beaton requested council approval now to "advance this work in a timely manner."

On Sept. 12, 2019 Greatario did an inspection of the water storage tower in Port Hastings, which found "significant damage" of the interior, Beaton said, noting that in October, the firm was able to temporarily stop leaks.

Beaton said the work involved tank repairs and a new mixer to keep tank circulating through the summer months. She said the roof vent assembly, sidewall panels, and interior piping brackets needed replacing, and they will have to do interior seal rehabilitation, remove sediment, and the tank will have to be emptied.

"This will be a big effort, the repairs on this tank, because the water tower will have to be taken offline for the work to be completed," she noted. "This is a big ticket item, as you see, but it's a very important asset."

Total cost of this project is \$95,283.09 according to Beaton, who told council they are hoping for minimal service disruptions in the Port Hastings area.

After talking to Finance director Tanya Tibbo, Beaton added there is \$400,000 available in the municipal depreciation budget to cover these costs.

Municipality of Kings calling on residents for testing

Twenty water utility residents in the Municipality of the County of Kings are needed to participate in the Corrosion Monitoring Program.

Five residents are to be from the Sandy Court Water Utility, while the other 15 are to be customers of the Greenwood Water Utility. The program identifies potential corrosion-causing parameters. Neither water utility contains lead, however lead and copper corrosion can potentially occur in older plumbing systems with galvanized iron, copper or brass pipes and fittings.

Program volunteers only need to pro-

vide one water sample, taken on a predetermined date in summer or autumn. Municipal staff will drop off and collect the sample bottle. Participating residents will receive the test results.

Once this baseline sampling has been completed for the Greenwood Water Utility, the municipality will establish a monitoring schedule. Data from this examination will enable the municipality to identify potential corrosion problems and prevent as required.

To volunteer, contact Carme Telesford at 902-690-2219 or ctelesford@countyofk-ings.ca.

New Glasgow finishes upgrade to universal water metering program

ANDY WALKER

The Town of New Glasgow has completed its \$1.4-million program to upgrade its universal water metering program.

"We just finished in late January," said Earl MacKenzie, director of Engineering and Public Works for the town.

After an extensive review process of the three applications, Mackenzie said the town chose the R900 System from Neptune Technology Group to supply water meters, an automated meter reading (AMR) system (both the hardware and software) and perform installations at previously metered properties within the town.

The director noted the previous meter system was increasingly antiquated and unreliable. He noted, "We were still reading some meters using pin readers, which is technology from the 1980s and it was not uncommon for the technology to fail leading to delays and additional costs."

Prior to the upgrade, approximately 1,200 of the 3,650 meters were AMR using a combination of direct wired to meter transmitters (R900i) and remotely wired

transmitters (R900). While this technology is considered current, MacKenzie noted about half of the AMR units were considered old and included for replacement in the project. The remaining 2,450 water meters were read either manually, by touch probe, or by an old pin reader device.

He noted the Neptune System will allow the town to move to advanced meter infrastructure (AMI) using cellular or installed gateways (towers) throughout the town that would automatically transmit data from each meter to the billing department.

The director said the town did elect to install the Neptune 360 cloud-based program, which provides a complete view of metering data and analytics. Mackenzie said the Neptune proposal won high marks for its ability to accommodate and support past generations of readers, encoder registers and data collectors.

During the project, MacKenzie said his department co-ordinated the home visits necessary to replace and upgrade the meters. He noted the new system will also allow customers to monitor their own water use and can alert users of a potential leak.



One of the Town of New Glasgow's new water meters with the R900 box that transmits the readings.

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Amherst's water rate change request approved

The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board approved the Town of Amherst's request to amend its rates for water and water services.

The approval was announced March 29 following a virtual public hearing on March 1.

The town applied for the rate change back in November 2021. No one from the public requested to speak at the hearing, and the utility and review board didn't receive any letters of comments.

Prior to the hearing, the town's existing schedules had been in effect since April 1, 2019 (its rates and charges for water and water services) and July 1, 2017 (schedule of rules and regulations).

The proposal was for increases in fiscal years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 (test years). Based on the average quarterly consumption for 5/8"-meter customers, the approved increases were 13.4 per cent, 3.3 per cent, and 3.4 per cent, respectively. For all other metered customers, the increases (based on the average quarterly consumption) were approved for 11.1-12.5 per cent, 3.6-3.7 per cent, and 3.7-3.8 per cent, respectively. Approved increases for unmetered customers in the test years at 7.9 per cent, 3.2 per cent, and 3.5 per cent.

Prior to the hearing, the town's annual public fire protection charge paid to the water utility was \$807,481. The approved changes will see an increase to \$829,844 in 2022-23, \$843,004 in 2023-24, and \$867,516 in 2024-25.

The utility services approximately 4,059 customers, with a projected increase of five residential customers in each of the test years.

A rate study submitted as part of the application indicates a slight decrease annually on the average consumption by 5/8-meter residential customers, and it's projected the decrease will continue by half a per cent each year



over the test period.

"The utility noted that a large percentage of their unmetered customers are land lease communities, commonly known as mobile home parks," reads the utility and review board's hearing document, signed by Jennifer Nicholson. "These communities have private distribution systems, which, if leaking or if usage is higher than estimated, could be a source of non-revenue water. The utility noted that town council did not pursue metering of these communities after push back from the mobile home park owners."

Those presenting the application said the increase of the rates were because of "higher operating costs, to fund the projected capital program, and to continue to provide a dividend to the town." Without an increase to the rates, the rate study expected the utility to see a \$332,891 deficiency in revenue in the final test year, despite currently exceeding expenses and recording an accumulated surplus of \$183,708. If rates remained the same, the rate study said the utility could see a reversal of the accumulated surplus to one of deficit totaling \$647,436. The projections included a \$135,000 dividend to the town in each of the three test years.

The study also included the utility's capital budgets for 2021-22 and all three test years: \$770,360, \$420,000, 490,000, and \$490,000, respectively. Of those totals, \$207,000 was budgeted in 2021-22 for replacing aging distribution mains, along with \$215,000 in the first test year and \$135,000 in the final test year.

"The utility is primarily focusing on repairing and replacing current infrastructure over the test years," reads the document. "The intended capital program will complete, among other things, the replacement of known problem distribution mains. The board recognizes the necessity of completing this work to address non-revenue water and improve service."

The board, however, reminded the utility including the proposed capital projects didn't constitute the board's approval of said projects.

"Separate board approval is required for projects more than \$250,000 as set out in s. 35 of the Act."

In the document, the board encourages the utility to replace problem mains when identified and it has the capacity for replacement. Metering the unmetered customers is also encouraged, as a means of "reducing and better calculating the non-revenue water in the system."

The approval of the rates and charges for water and water services schedule is effective April 1, 2022, April 1, 2023, and April 1, 2024.

MPWWA Executive 2022

Chair, Jeff Rogers Town of Quispamsis Fax: 506-849-5799 Cell: 506-333-0610 jrogers@quispamsis.ca

Past Chair, Jerry Villard Town of Stratford Phone: 902-393-6281 Fax: 902-569-5000 Cell: 902-393-6281 jvillard@town.stratford.pe.ca

Zone 1, Nicolas Legere Ville de Caraquet Phone: 506-726-2727 Fax: 506-726-2687 nicolas.legere@caraquet.ca

Zone 2, Troy Atkinson, Vice Chair CRTP Service Cordinator Cell: 506-381-9811

troyatkinson77@yahoo.ca

Zone 3, Jeff Rogers Town of Quispamsis Fax: 506-849-5799 Cell: 506-333-0610 irogers@quispamsis.ca

Zone 4, Rick Larlee

City of Fredericton Phone: 506-460-2224 Fax: 506-460-2013 Cell: 506-474-3472 rick.larlee@fredericton.ca

Zone 5, Vacant

Zone 6, Martin Croney West Hants Regional Mun. Phone: 902-790-1545 Fax: 902-798-5679 Cell: 902-790-1545 mcroney@westhants.ca

Zone 7, Kevin Kelloway Halifax Water Phone: 902-869-4290 Fax: 902-435-8403 Cell: 902-717-2353 kevink@halifaxwater.ca

Zone 8, Ross MacInnis Town of Port Hawkesbury Cell: 902-227-7143 rmacinnis@townofph.ca

Zone 9, Jerry Villard

Town of Stratford Phone: 902-393-6281 Fax: 902-569-5000 Cell: 902-393-6281 jvillard@townofstratford.ca

Zone 10, Josh Chisholm Municipality of Antigonish Phone: 902-863-5004 Fax: 902-863-5751 josh.chisholm@antigonishcounty.ns.ca

Zone 11, Corbin Stevens Pictou Landing Band Council Phone: 902-759-3597 corbin.s@plfn.ca

Zone 12, Tim Henman

Eastern Passage Phone: 902-427-3797 Fax: 902-427-0212 Cell: 902-802-3595 timothy.henman@forces.gc.ca

Secretary, Jerry Villard Town of Stratford Phone: 902-393-6281 Fax: 902-569-5000 Cell: 902-393-6281 jvillard@townofstratford.ca

Treasurer, Rick Larlee

City of Fredericton Phone: 506-460-2224 Fax: 506-460-2013 Cell: 506-474-3472 rick.larlee@fredericton.ca

Executive Secretary, Clara Shea MPWWA Phone: 902-434-8874

Fax: 902-434-8859 Cell: 902-830-9208 contact@mpwwa.ca

Nova Scotia, Krysta Montreuil NS Environment & Climate Change, Halifax Phone: 902-478-8026 Krysta.Montreuil@novascotia.ca

PEI, Ben Lanigan Charlottetown Phone: 902-368-5043 Fax:902-368-5830 bpklanigan@gov.pe.ca



Newfoundland, Deneen Spracklin St. John's, NL Phone: 709-729-1158 Fax: 709-729-0320 Cell: 709-693-0296 dspracklin@gov.nl.ca

Commercial Rep, Melanie MacKinnon Fall River

Phone: 902-861-4710 Fax: 902-861-1366 Cell: 902-802-8238 melanie@nulantic.ca

Commercial Rep,

Andre Van Der Velden Dartmouth Phone: 902-450-1177 Fax: 902-450-1170 Cell: 506-852-0411 andre.van.der.velden@xyleminc.com

Webmaster, Rick Larlee City of Fredericton Phone: 506-460-2224 Fax: 506-460-2013 Cell: 506-474-3472 rick.larlee@fredericton.ca

Training Coordinator, Tim Henman

Eastern Passage Phone: 902-427-3797 Fax: 902-427-0212 Cell: 902-802-3595 timothy.henman@forces.gc.ca

Seminar Coordinator, Vacant

. . . .

Atlantic First Nations Water Authority gearing up operations



Carl Yates, chief executive officer of Atlantic First Nations Water Authority.

ANDY WALKER

The Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA) is calling an announcement of \$173.2 million over the next decade to support the transfer of water and wastewater services in 17 First Nations communities to the water authority a "huge step in the right direction."

First Nations owns and operates the nonprofit water authority for First Nations. Its goal is to provide clean drinking water and safe water and wastewater services, and will be responsible for the operations, maintenance and upgrade of all water and wastewater assets in its member communities.

The funding was contained in the 2022-2023 federal budget and Potlotek First Nation Chief Wilbert Marshall, who also chairs the board of directors for the water authority, noted the next step will be to meet with the current participating communities and respective chiefs and councils over the coming months to develop an asset management plan and supervisory control and data acquisition master plan.

'This is great news for AFNWA, for the communities we serve, and for all First Nations communities in the Wabanaki territory within Atlantic Canada," said Carl Yates, AFNWA chief executive officer and

DNME

former general manager of Halifax Water. While we have reached many milestones in our first two years of transitioning towards full operations, we are pleased to continue the journey to ready ourselves for service this fall "

The authority signed a transfer agreement with the federal government in 2021, which included \$2.5 million in start-up funding.

The communities currently part of the authority are Elsipogtog, Kingsclear, Oromocto, Tobique, St. Mary's and Esgenoôpetitj First Nations in New Brunswick; Acadia, Eskasoni, Glooscap, Membertou, Millbrook, Pagtnkek, Pictou Landing, Potlotek and Sipekne'katik First Nations in Nova Scotia, and the Abegweit and Lennox Island First Nations in Prince Edward Island.



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County of Antigonish seeks funding for waterline extension projects

DRAKE LOWTHERS

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish will apply for grants to help fund waterline extension projects, with the municipality's top priority being St. Joseph's.



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During the municipality's council meeting on Feb. 8, chief administrative officer Glenn Horne advised local govern-

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ments can apply for up to 73.33 per cent of the funding from the provincial and federal governments, while the county would be on the hook for a minimum of 26.67 per cent of the total cost.

Warden Owen McCarron said it's good to see ICIP applications open within the province.

"We're certainly going to put a couple projects on that list," McCarron said. "One notable will be the St. Joseph's waterline extension, so that's certainly top of mind and at the top of the priority list for the municipality."

The warden explained senior staff will also look into a number of other projects they're currently working on, and will come to a decision on another project for funding in the second round of applications.

"So likely two waterline extensions is what we'll put in for, and we'll see where that goes," McCarron said. "We haven't landed on what the other one is going to be. We have several, we're just looking at some final details on a couple, but we'll know likely within a week or two, which will be the second one."

The program provides long-term funding through Infrastructure Canada to help communities reduce air and water pollution, provide clean water, increase resilience to climate change and create a clean-growth economy. According to the program, it also aims to build strong, dynamic and inclusive communities, and ensure families have access to modern, reliable services that improve their quality of life.

Under the program, more than \$33 billion in funding is being delivered through bilateral agreements between Infrastructure Canada and each of the provinces and territories.

"In the perfect world, it would be nice to get funding for two," McCarron said. "But certainly the top priority one right now for council is the St. Joseph's line extension."

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Town of Bridgewater seeking increase to water rates

A public hearing is set for early May in regards to a request from the Town of Bridgewater to change its water rates.

The town has applied for approval to changes to the schedule of rates and charges for water and water services, as well as fire protection. The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board will host a public hearing May 10, 10:30 a.m., on the matter in Bridgewater's council chambers. Depending on COVID-19 circumstances, the public hearing could move to GoToWebinar video conferencing.

The town is proposing a 3.8 per cent increase, to \$131.50 in 2022-23 from \$126.74, for its 5/8"-meter residential customers. The rate increase also includes a 2.2 per cent, to \$134.41, increase in 2023-24, and a 3.4 per cent increase in 2024-25, which would see the rate at \$138.92.

The proposal also includes amendments for all other metered services: ranging from a 5.1 to 14.7 per cent increase in 2022-23, a -3 to 11.1 per cent increase in 2023-24, and a one to 10.4 per cent increase in 2024-25.

According to the documents submitted for the hearing, the town's utility has a two-block consumption rate structure. The first block of consumption is currently set at the first 100,000 cubic metres per year. The proposed changes would also affect the first block of consumption to the first 110,000 cubic metres for 2022-23, the first 155,000 cubic metres in 2023-24, and the first 195,000 cubic metres in 2024-25.

In regards to fire protection, amendments are proposed to the charge paid by both the Town of Bridgewater and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg. The charge is allocated between the two units based on the number of hydrants serving each jurisdiction.

The current annual charge for fire protection is \$884,332, and the proposal is for an 8.5 per cent increase, to \$959,902, in 2022-23, a 9.1 per cent increase in 2023-24 to \$1,047,335, and an 8.9 per cent increase to \$1,140,815 in 2024-25.

Those wishing to speak at the public hearing must notify the utility and review board by May 2. Written submissions are also accepted until May 2. Letters can be sent to the Clerk of the Board, P.O. Box 1692, Unit M, Halifax, N.S., B3J 3S3. Letters can be emailed to board@novascotia.ca, or faxed to 902-424-3919.

Once it reviews the town's application, the utility and review board can approve the proposed amendments, or determine the amendments should be higher or lower than proposed.

More information on the application, including timeline, can be found online at https://nsuarb.novascotia.ca/, by searching for matter number M10427 under 'Matters and Evidence' and 'Go to Files and Documents'.

Cape Breton water customers can volunteer for copper, lead sampling

The Cape Breton Regional Municipality Water Utility is searching for its annual volunteers to have their residential tap water tested for lead and copper.

The program, which runs on a first come first serve basis, is for water utility customers, not those with a well as a source of water. The utility routinely monitors water quality within its distribution systems. Two years ago, the provincial environmental department introduced additional lead and copper requirements in water customers' homes.

The program is free of charge and open to a limited number of customers within the distribution systems of Sydney, Glace Bay, Northside, New Waterford, Louisbourg, Floral Heights and Centreville.

Once samples are tested, customers will receive a letter with their results. While copper and lead are natural environmental occurrences, their main source in drinking water is via leaching in plumbing material, such as pipes, solder, faucets and fittings. Copper is an acceptable material in plumbing use, however the National Plumbing Code disallowed lead in pipes as of 1975. Lead in solder was unacceptable as of 1986, and it was 2013 when lead in fittings and faucets was discontinued.

Health Canada lowered its maximum acceptable concentration for lead in drinking water in 2019 to 0.005 mg/L from 0.010 mg/L, and introduced a new maximum acceptable concentration for copper of 2 mg/L.

Health Canada also changed the acceptable locations for sample collection. Copper and lead test samples are now collected from homes and buildings where customers obtain water for drinking and cooking.

Cape Breton Regional Municipality has a goal of testing samples from 150 residences from among its water system customers. Interested customers can apply online at www.cbrm.ns.ca/water-utility.

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Sewer plant parts purchase more than \$100,000 over budget

KEITH CORCORAN

Civic politicians in Bridgewater authorized the purchase of some replacement components bound for the LaHave Street sewage facility, a price more than \$100,000 over the amount budgeted for the items.

The cost set aside for assemblies-related rotating biological contactor shaft and drive aspects was \$290,000 and already earmarked in the 2022-23 capital budget. But the town's environmental services manager, Audrey Buchanan, believes market pressures drove up the price. Pennsylvania-based Evoqua Water Technologies, which has seven offices in Canada, won the \$424,657 procurement. Town council is pondering contacting the organization that looks out for the federal interests of municipalities given what they feel is a pattern of escalating costs to comply with mandated wastewater changes handed down by other levels of government.

Bridgewater's sewage treatment plant was built in 1990. A 2018 study of Bridgewater's sanitary stormwater system estimated that spending of between \$25 million and \$48 million would be needed to meet wastewater facilities and operations requirements dictated by federal and provincial regulations. Other levels of government set a 2039 deadline for Canadian municipalities to eliminate current wastewater overflows, described as unprocessed sewer discharged into the environment, likely to a body of water.

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Residents thrilled Tatamagouche water supply protected

RAISSA TETANISH

raissatetanish@advocatemediainc.com

Kathryn Anderson can finally breathe a sigh of relief when she pours herself a glass of water at home.

In fact, all residents whose drinking water comes from the French River watershed can after the province finally approved Colchester County's request to designate it a protected water area.

"For us, as residents of Tatamagouche and living a block and a half from where the French River enters the Tatamagouche Bay, we are hugely relieved," Anderson said on behalf of herself and her partner, Wilf Bean, the day following the government's announcement in late January. "The threat of contamination of the water really was serious and with being a single source community for getting our water from the French River watershed, this really was a threat."

For the past four years, Anderson and Bean have been members of Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia (SuNNS), a group created to fight potential gold exploration and mining in the Warwick Mountains. They learned of the province's 30,000-hectare project through a front page story in the November 2017 edition of The Light, one of Advocate Media's publications. The French River watershed is one of seven watersheds within the project area. "We're lucky to have water that is pure, when not many people have that. To think we could lose that and many communities around the world, including North America, have lost that through mining, came to my mind many times," she said.

With word of the province's designation, members of SuNNS are hoping it means an end to the overall project.

"There were six other watersheds that could be affected," said Anderson, a spokesperson for SuNNS. "It was only because we have a water treatment facility in Tatamagouche that there was a water protection committee, whereas the other communities don't have that. We're hopeful that the whole project may not go forward."

Patricia Jreige, communications advisor with Natural Resources and Renewables, says staff will review options when it comes to the Warwick Mountain project and make a recommendation to Minister Tory Rushton. Unfortunately Jreige doesn't have a timeline as to when that could happen.

Since forming in 2018, SuNNS members educated the public and Colchester County councillors on the dangers of gold mining, which then concluded in county council unanimously approving a motion in January 2020 to apply for protected water status of the watershed. With the province approving council's request, the county is able to decide on what activities can or



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Petitcodiac, New Brunswick Ph: 506-756-2930 • Fax: 506-756-2838 www.maritimeblower.com can't go ahead within the protected area. Mining is now prohibited.

"(This announcement) has given us a boost," said Madeline Conacher, also a spokesperson for the group. "SuNNS is interested not only in the French River watershed, but we're interested in protecting all of Nova Scotia."

Along with one gold mine currently operating in Moose River, Conacher says there are three others on the Eastern Shore going through the environmental assessment process.

SuNNS, she adds, has been supporting the Eastern Shore in their efforts at the same time.

"We feel a boost that we've been able to get through to the government, but we have a lot of work. SuNNS is going to have a planning meeting (in February) to talk about how to go forward in supporting getting rid of gold mining throughout Nova Scotia," she said.

If the Warwick Mountain goes ahead around the French River watershed, Conacher and Anderson agree that SuNNS will push both Cumberland and Colchester counties to apply for protected status for all remaining watersheds within the area.

Both Anderson and Conacher credited the Light's article in making a difference to the community. Without it, Anderson doubts the group would've gotten organized.

"As it turns out, our community had quite a number of people who knew something about mining already and were very concerned when they saw this," said Anderson, who has worked in solidarity since 2004 with communities resisting Canadian gold mining companies in Guatemala.

Along with waiting almost two years for a decision from the government, Anderson says the most stressful part was whether or not the group had a way forward with the government. "At the same time though, I would say the other side of that is when communities choose to organize, educate, participate in discussions in the community and with the municipality, have presentations, have a water walk with Indigenous grandmothers ... all of that was also very satisfying."

Conacher wanted to acknowledge the amount of work SuNNS members have undertaken over the past four years, which also included having a geological document prepared, speakers on the topic and more.

"It just goes to show how important local newspapers are, but shows sadly how much work the community has to put in to getting through to the government. It's not a negative, we just have to put that work in. It's fruitful, it's worth it, the democratic process can work, it just takes a lot of work," said Conacher.

Both women say they were thrilled of the province's decision, and believe it was the collective effort that made the difference.

"If SuNNS had protested by itself without involving the community, without having letter writing campaigns, without a table at the farmers' market, without the water walk with the grandmother defenders, without the signs all over the community, I don't think we would have achieved this," said Anderson. "I really believe it was a real effort by many people."

She also credited Coun. Mike Gregory and Mayor Christine Blair for stepping up for the residents.

"They listened to us. They were willing to hear and learn. They did change their position significantly."

While the group's next steps forward have yet to be decided on, one point remains certain for Anderson: "There's absolutely no need, from a point of view of the climate crisis, to have gold mining in Nova Scotia. There's a massive amount of gold in this world to be recycled."

Wood harvesting proposal for watershed area raises concerns for elected representatives, environmentalists

Continued from page 1

The department said the Petite lakes have been protected since 2006 by a Protected Water Area designation under the Nova Scotia Environment Act. As part of this designation, regulations are in place that address activities in the watershed that could impact water quality, such as agriculture, forestry, road construction, development and certain aspects of mining.

"Sectors such as agriculture and forestry already undertake land-based activities in the Petite Riviere watershed," Stewart added. "There has been no evidence linking these activities to aquatic habitat degradation or negative effects on Atlantic whitefish."

Social and climate activists are also getting involved in the push-back against the harvesting proposal.

George Buranyi emailed Lighthouse-NOW to say he's helping organize a group, which has already started a letterwriting campaign.

Buranyi said the long-term plan is to try and persuade the province to declare the watershed a protected wilderness area.

To learn more about the harvest plans, visit https://nsgi.novascotia.ca/hpmv/.

Charlottetown planning more than \$13 million in capital water, sewer expenditures

The City of Charlottetown is planning more than \$13 million in capital improvements to its water and sewer service.

Leading the list is \$3.3 million for water and sewer rehabilitation on the eastern gateway project, while a similar amount has been allocated for rehabilitation and enhancements of sewer lift stations. There is \$1.5 million allocated for water, sewer and wastewater services in the area of a new St. Peters/ Belvedere Avenue roundabout, and \$1 million budgeted for rehabilitation of the water and sewer lines on Garfield and Harley Streets.

There is also \$1 million allocated for

upgrades to the Charlottetown Area pollution control plant and another \$500,000 for capital projects at the regional pollution plant. The spending also includes \$500,000 allocated for capital projects at the Mt. Edward Road booster station and rehabilitation of sewer lift stations.

Half a million is budgeted for the purchase of new vehicles and equipment, \$200,000 in contingency funds, and \$100,000 for Pond Street rehabilitation.

The utility will be receiving \$8,673,080 from the federal and provincial governments, including \$5,573,080 in infrastructure funding and \$3,100,000 from the gas tax. That leaves the city's share of the capital building at \$4,726,920.

Moncton offering leak alerts for water customers

Residents in Moncton can be notified of a potential water leak in their home.

The city is encouraging its residents to opt-in for water leak alerts in the online water and wastewater billing portal. The alerts will be delivered via email should there be any unexpected water consumption at the customer's residence.

Residents who sign up for the alerts must first identify their average water consumption. The portal, found at myaccounts.moncton.ca, features a meter data tab that outlines daily water consumption. Once an average is selected, that information is included in the notification section for alert emails.

If the resident's consumption passes the identified average, they will receive an email of a potential leak. A leaking toilet flapper, says information on Moncton's website, can cost up to \$60 per day. A replacement flapper costs roughly \$20.

For more information on water leaks and how to sign-up, residents can visit https:// www.moncton.ca/leaks.



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