

Bayside Port Corporation celebrates 10th anniversary



Barb Rayner/Courier

Maureen Worrall and Peter Frye were presented with commemorative keys to the port of Bayside during the 10th anniversary celebrations for the Bayside Port Corporation Thursday. The keys were presented in recognition of their work for 30 years in keeping the port alive. From left are the corporation's chief operations officer Darrell Weare, Worrall, Frye and corporation president Mike Power.

By **BARB RAYNER**
barbrayne@stcroix.ca

BAYSIDE - Bayside port is probably the only one in New Brunswick operated and maintained with no government funding since it was purchased by the Bayside Port Corporation 10 years ago.

Directors and users, as well as those involved in the work behind the scenes leading up to the acquisition, were invited to a 10th anniversary port appreciation day Thursday.

They were welcomed by corporation president Mike Power, who said this was the first of what they hoped would become an annual event.

Chief operations officer Darrell Weare said they wanted to express appreciation to the steering committee that worked hard on the acquisition of the port and the continuation of the activity that was in progress there.

It was in 1978, he said, that Robert Rogers, minister of public works for the Dominion of Canada, commissioned a study of St. Croix Harbour. The study concluded this could be a great national port for Canada, with room for 300 of the largest ships afloat, without any expense for dredging.

However, it was not until some years later, in 1987, that the original

wharf in Bayside was constructed to handle the tuna cargoes going to the now defunct Ocean Maid tuna plant.

"Will it ever reach the status of a great national port?" Weare asked. "I think we got started a little late on that. In our minds it is a great port and it is international in scope. Most of the business is international."

The business of operating the port has been challenging over the last 10 years, he said, with the need for heightened security and changing world markets making it difficult for port users to generate a consistent revenue stream.

As a private corporation, he said, they have to pay income tax at a high

corporate rate, which takes a lot of their dollars - money which could be better spent on expanding the port and developing infrastructure.

Unfortunately, they cannot change that other than to give up their private status, but there is no doubt it has hampered the growth of the port, Weare said.

As they celebrated their 10 anniversary as a private corporation, he said they wanted to show their appreciation to those people who in 1987, 1988 and 1989 worked so many hours for no fee serving on the steering committee.

When the local municipalities determined they did not have the

financial resources to acquire the port, it moved to the private sector. A steering committee was set up with Fred Nicholson as chair and began negotiations with the federal government.

Initially, the asking price was \$9 million and while they were able to negotiate down, they still paid a considerable price for the port and are still paying on their mortgage, Weare said.

"We are probably the only port that ended up being sold by the federal government," he said. "The rest of them have been given away and some were given \$20 million for them to operate the port."

"We are fighting to get recognition from various levels of government that we deserve to be treated the same as the other ports and that will come, I hope."

Weare said there were two people who were at the port long before it became a private corporation - Peter Frye and Maureen Worrall - and they, together with their families, kept it a viable operation for about 30 years.

Frye came to work at the port about 1974 and two of his daughters are still working in the cold storage, while Worrall started work there around 1978 or '79, Weare said. Worrall and her husband, Glenn, carried on the stevedoring business.

"They kept the port open for business all the time it was owned by the federal government and continued to be involved after it was private," Weare said. "Maureen was secretary of the steering committee and now of the port corporation, and Pete served on the steering committee and was first vice-president of the corporation."

"These were the people who were probably responsible for keeping the port alive for 30 years."

On behalf of the corporation, Power then presented Worrall and Frye with "keys to the port" in recognition of their contributions.

Fred Nicholson said the port continues to be a viable operation for Charlotte County and although business is not as diversified as they would like, they are still optimistic about the future. Although it is owned by a private corporation, it is a public port, Nicholson said.

The towns of St. Andrews, St. George and St. Stephen, as well as the village of McAdam, are collectively shareholders in the corporation - they hold one seat - and Nicholson said he would like to encourage them to promote the port and port business. He also reminded the stevedores' union that it, too, is entitled to a place on the board.

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Bayside Port

Pet Kervia, general manager of Bayside Food Terminal and Fundy Stevedoring, who moved here three years ago from Dutch Harbour, Alaska, said they are trying to increase traffic at the port and increase the size of the cold storage.

In 2006 the payroll at the port was \$20,000 and in 2007 it increased to \$1.1 million, Kervia said. Last year's payroll was \$1.3 million, not including the cold storage, and Jamar Materials accounted for 20 per cent of that, he said.

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In the last three years private investors have contributed \$1.6 million in new equipment and building renovations.

"Now we are in a bit of a downturn but we are trying to change that," Kervia said.

Mark Clark, general manager of Jamar Materials, said his company's work has closely followed the same timeline as the corporation.

Since 1998, he said, Jamar has shipped 12.3 million tonnes of aggregate out of the port, which is about 977 ships involving about 87,000 man-hours to load, and they expect many more ships to follow.

The company will continue to create space for additional expansion and the new businesses they hope to attract to the port, Clark said. It will work with the port, as well as local stakeholders, to promote this growth, he said.

Ware added that Jamar has created five acres of laydown area and is working on creating the 95-acre industrial park. A laydown area is a space that has been cleared for the temporary storage of equipment and supplies.

"Even though the industrial park will not be under my control, you can rest assured that the users will be pushing for businesses to come into that business park by land and operate hopefully through the port, but we don't necessarily need businesses that use the port," Ware said.

After the original wharf was constructed in 1967 it was expanded in 1988 to facilitate increasing cargoes of forestry and agricultural products.

The cold storage facility was built in 1991 and the dry storage warehouse in 1995.

Querying to create more laydown area at the port began in 1998 and the following year the port was purchased by the corporation.

In 2006 the cold storage facility was expanded and two years later the dockside dry storage warehouse was also expanded.

Shareholders are: Bayside Bulk Terminal (600 shares), Logistec Stevedoring (100), Woodstock Cold Storage (100), Fundy Stevedoring (100), Bayside Potato Port (100), Champlain Stevedoring (100), Town of St. Andrews (25), Town of St. Stephen (25), Town of St. George (25) and Village of McAdam (25), totalling 1,100 shares.

The Bayside Food Terminal, with 7,000 tonnes of cold storage, handles fish from Alaska, Canadian port to Russia and Canadian potatoes to Cuba, as well as local goods.

Fundy Stevedoring dry storage, with more than 95,000 square feet of storage, handles potatoes to Cuba, forest products to South America and the United States, and fertilizer for Canadian potato farmers. Last year about 40 to 45 ships worked out of the port.

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