



## MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Town, VIA Rail reach tentative deal to save historic Amherst train station



The Town of Amherst and VIA Rail have reached a tentative deal that will result in the revitalization of the railway's former train station in Amherst. (Town of Amherst photo)

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia** – VIA Rail and the Town of Amherst have reached a tentative deal that will breathe new life into the town's historic rail station.

"We've received a draft agreement from VIA and council will be taking steps within the next two



weeks to seal the deal,” Mayor David Kogon said Jan. 9.

“We have to give VIA kudos for responding so quickly to the concerns we expressed last week that it was dragging on too long. We are looking forward to proceeding with this win-win project that will benefit the town via the revitalization of the VIA Rail station and while facilitating the expansion of a local business.”

VIA Rail’s delivery of a draft agreement came soon after the town expressed concerns the deal between itself, VIA Rail and local entrepreneur Jeff Bembridge was slipping away after several attempts over the past few years to have it completed.

“As far as the town is concerned we have a done deal,” Kogon said. “Like the closing of a house, there are still some legal matters that have to be completed before the deal is closed, which should happen on March 1.”

Among the legal items is the filing of a survey with the Nova Scotia Land Registry and a formal approval of the deal by council. Council is expected to approve the deal during its Jan 22 meeting.

The deal will see the town purchase the station, which was closed in 2012, from VIA. The town in turn will rent the property to Bembridge via a five-year, lease-to-purchase agreement that will see ownership of the station turned over to Bembridge at the conclusion of the deal.

Bembridge plans on placing an existing take-out restaurant in one part of the station and developing a new family restaurant in another part of the station.

As part of the deal, the town has declared the station a Municipal Heritage property, which means no demolition or substantial alterations to the exterior of the building can take place without the permission of the Town of Amherst. The town also agreed to rent space within the station to VIA so that its passengers would have a waiting room and access to washrooms, as well as a space for some technology that is needed for railway operations.

“While we are disappointed it took as long as it did, we are extremely happy we have reached a tentative deal with VIA Rail and that this project will move ahead,” Kogon said. “It will help keep the downtown viable and active. It will revitalize a heritage property.”

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