



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2019008

DATE: 13 February 2019

RE: Three-way deal gives new life to Amherst's historic train station

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Amherst's historic train station has a new lease on life.

On Jan. 29, Town of Amherst officials, VIA Rail officials and Jeff Bembridge of J.E. Bembridge Enterprises signed five agreements that will result in Bembridge developing a restaurant in the station.

The agreements will see the town purchase the 111-year-old station, which was closed in 2012, as well as a portion of Station Street and the adjacent parking lots from Via Rail. 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.

“This has been a long time coming, but it is finally here and it's a great day,” Mayor David Kogon said of the deal that took more than three years to negotiate.

“Working together, we have saved a historic building while ensuring that it is viable well into the future.”

“As part of a program to revitalize train stations throughout Canada, VIA Rail is pleased that the Amherst heritage station facilities will better serve the community, as this will give new life and



Amherst CAO Greg Herrett and Planning and Strategic Initiatives Manager Andrew Fisher watch as Mayor David Kogon and Jeff Bembridge of J.E. Bembridge Enterprises sign agreements that will see a restaurant established in the historic train station. (Tom McCoag / Town of Amherst)



vocation to one of Canada's most beautiful railway landmarks," said Yves Desjardins Siciliano, president and chief executive officer of VIA Rail.

"Upon completion of the planned renovations, the re-opening of a shared section of the old station will allow us to welcome more customers and enhance their travel experience."

Bembridge said he was excited and scared to death, all at the same time.

"This is a big adventure," he said, adding his plans are set and he is ready to start the renovations the moment he obtains the keys to the station.

As part of the deals, the town has declared the station a Municipal Heritage property, which means no demolition or substantial alteration to the exterior of the building can take place without the permission of the Town of Amherst. The designation does not prevent the interior from being renovated.



A deal between the Town of Amherst, VIA Rail and J.E. Bembridge Enterprises has given new life to Amherst's historic train station. (Tom McCoag / Town of Amherst)

The town has also agreed to rent space within the station to VIA Rail – trains still stop at the station if they are taking on or letting off passengers in Amherst - so passengers will have a waiting room and access to washrooms. This lease will be taken over by Bembridge when he assumes ownership of the building.

The deals close on March 1.

The town will spend up to \$7,000 to install a new furnace in the building, but during the five-year, lease-to-purchase deal, Bembridge will pay the town a total of \$64,980 plus HST in monthly installments. Upon the conclusion of the deal, the town will begin to receive tax revenue from Bembridge.

"This is a pretty good economic deal for the town," Kogon said. "The town gets just under \$65,000 from Bembridge over the length of the deal and after five years, we will begin to receive tax revenue from that property, while only spending \$7,000 for a new furnace.

"Just as important, we are ensuring a viable operation will exist in the historic train station, which in turn helps our downtown continue to be a great place to live, work and play."

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