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Campaign exceeds goal

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Civic centre: Community donates more than \$3 million to dairy town project

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Telegraph-Journal

SUSSEX - The community still needs a heavy handout from governments in order to make the Fundy Civic Centre happen, but for now, members of the future facility's board of directors are cheering loudly.

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Tammy Scott-Wallace/Telegraph-Journal

The fundraising goal of \$3 million has been exceeded for the Fundy Civic Centre, and campaign chairman John Robinson and board of directors chairwoman Wendy Osborne are ecstatic. There will be a celebration in April to thank those who have supported the project.

The community's fundraising goal of \$3 million has been exceeded, project campaign chairman John Robinson has announced.

The amount donated in the community has reached \$3,047,716.41.

"John Robinson and his team of fundraisers worked incredibly hard to reach this goal and the board is very thankful for their hard work and belief in the project," said Wendy Osborne, chairwoman of the centre's board of directors.

Robinson, along with a team of division chairs including John deWinter Sr., Alan deWinter, Allan Eisner, Mark Webster, Shelley Vail, Ruby Gray and Harley Geldart, assembled committees of fundraisers who approached businesses and individuals for donations.

"It was a team effort," Robinson said. "These chairs did a tremendous amount of work and have been key people in directing the campaign. I also want to thank each of the committee members. We are proud of our many volunteers and deeply appreciate their hard work and dedication in bringing us to our goal."

Osborne said people the region were generous when they were approached to support the project.

"The people in this community believe in this project," she said. "Businesses, individuals, service clubs, small groups ... they have all gone above and beyond."

But before people can take that dive in the pool, the board of directors has to come up with \$3 million to cover the difference between the cost expected for the project, and its reality. When bids were submitted before Christmas, the price had risen drastically more than expected because of the increased cost of construction, Osborne said.

With the cost of the building, construction of a road to access it, municipal service hook-ups, and for costs from design and engineering work to the expense of professional fundraisers to help launch the campaign, all together the cost of the project is \$9 million. The community has \$6 million. What was considered a \$6-million project was announced in 2008 with the federal and provincial governments together contributing \$3 million, and the community committed to raising the other \$3 million.

"When we did our numbers, \$6 million was more than doable," Osborne said. Those numbers were reviewed and supported at the time by the provincial Department of Supply and Services as well.

The community did its part and will not be asked for more fundraising dollars, she said. "We asked the community for \$3 million and we got \$3 million. The community generously supported this project and we're just incredibly grateful."

Osborne said the community came together for the fundraising campaign that reached its goals thanks to over 300 individuals, businesses and organizations that committed their time and money.

Instead, Osborne said, Sussex Mayor Ralph Carr has met with the provincial and federal governments asking for help in covering the significant shortfall. His council is willing to come on board with help from the other levels of government.

Now that all the pitches for the funds have been made, the board of directors is waiting for responses.

The higher bids were disappointing, Osborne said. In meeting with government officials, she said she has learned that project after project in the province that went to tender in the fall of 2009 and afterwards came in significantly over budget.

"What we are seeing is small in terms of overages compared to some of the stories we are hearing," Osborne said. "The construction world has changed since our project was launched."

She said for plumbing quotes for the job, for example, that trade is so busy that no businesses

responded to the tender call for that portion of the work. Businesses had to be approached door to door to submit quotes, which resulted in higher pricing.

Osborne is confident that come spring, work will begin on the infrastructure to provide services and a road to the Main Street civic centre, and she is optimistic that the necessary levels of government will come on board to allow the building to start to come alive around the same time.

She said it is still the board's goal to have people swimming in the pool before this year expires.

"There's never been a project more shovel ready than the Fundy Civic Centre," she said.

The Fundy Civic Centre will be named the PotashCorp Civic Centre upon its opening as part of a \$1-million gift from PotashCorp New Brunswick. The centre will feature a 25-metreswimming pool, a walking/jogging track and a fitness room.

Osborne said the Fundy Civic Centre office will continue to be open on a part-time basis in its space at the Gateway Mall, which is being provided at no rent.

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The new name makes me absolutely sick. "PotashCorp Civic Centre"

Off the backs of Penobsquis'ers who are losing everything should be the name.

It's a good project...a shame they are associating themselves that closely with the Mine.

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