

Mount Carleton improvements will continue

Politicians, volunteers see bright future for park

By Mark Rickard

Polishing the crown jewel of New Brunswick's provincial park system will require a little extra effort this year. Tourism Minister Stuart Jamieson said the \$600,000 in capital improvements planned for Mount Carleton Provincial Park this season will make the park a more attractive place for tourists.

"I think this announcement is great news. We have been working hard to restore Mount Carleton back to its former glory and even beyond. I went up there a couple of years ago... I said I think we can restore this place, the log cabins and the fire tower at the top was all run down. We have had a great crew and they have done great work to restore the park."

Jamieson said the efforts to restore the log cabins at Nictau Lake saved 18

of the historic structures and the two beyond repair were used to complete the other cottages.

"We restored the fire tower, we have opened up all of the campgrounds, we have opened up all of the trails now and we have increased the operating budget to man the gates (from May to October). We are proud of what we have done and people are very happy with what we have done."

Jamieson said the \$600,000 in improvements this year will complete the cottage, purchase new equipment and upgrade the campground and park trails. The department will cooperate with the University de Moncton to develop an environmentally friendly electrical system for Nictau Lodge and the cottages.

"They are going to help out in some

solar and wind energy for the cottages. It will be our showcase for ecotourism. It is coming along really well," Jamieson said.

Electricity to the remote park is currently supplied by generators for only the park offices. The cottage project will supply lights and other low-level electrical draw for some of the rustic log cabins.

The tourism minister said the park improvements are drawing interest in Mount Carleton and the province is seeing more visitors to the remote location.

"I was in London (England) several weeks ago and people were asking where they could go where it is really wilderness areas and we were bragging about Mount Carleton. It is a magnificent area of lakes, rivers and mountains. We are

really selling this as a destination."

Jamieson said Mount Carleton's new range will help the whole Appalachian Range scenic drive, which stretches from Perth-Andover to Charlo, attract more visitors.

"DOT is also making some improvements to the road to Mount Carleton. We are hoping this will all attract more visitors. We are also working with the aboriginal community that is interested in being part of the park."

The province invested \$1.2 million over the last several years to bring the park back to an acceptable standard after years of budget cutbacks and neglect to the park under the previous government. Jamieson said this year's improvements should "be the icing on the cake".

"The operational budget has increased from \$169,000 to close to \$700,000 now. We have put a lot more money into running this park, into keeping the park looking good, the trails open and the campground running. I am happy that the government has seen fit to play a big role here. This is part of the work we have been doing to the north."

The additional improvements to the historical nature preserve gets a thumbs-up from the Friends of Mount Carleton Park, a volunteer organization formed to improve, protect, and assist in the management and stewardship of Mount Carleton. President Susan Mulherin said the group is excited the funds are coming through to finish the renovations. The Friends of Mount Carleton was formed in part to lobby against the continued deterioration of the park.

"We also lobbied for the gate fee to be reinstated and have some accountability at the gate. All these years of neglect and a lot of it was vandalism because they had no control in the park. Another thing we lobbied for is year-round staffing at the park which they now have as well."

Mulherin said the volunteers were very pleased to see the famous fire tower refurbished at the peak of Mount Carleton, the highest elevation in the Maritimes.

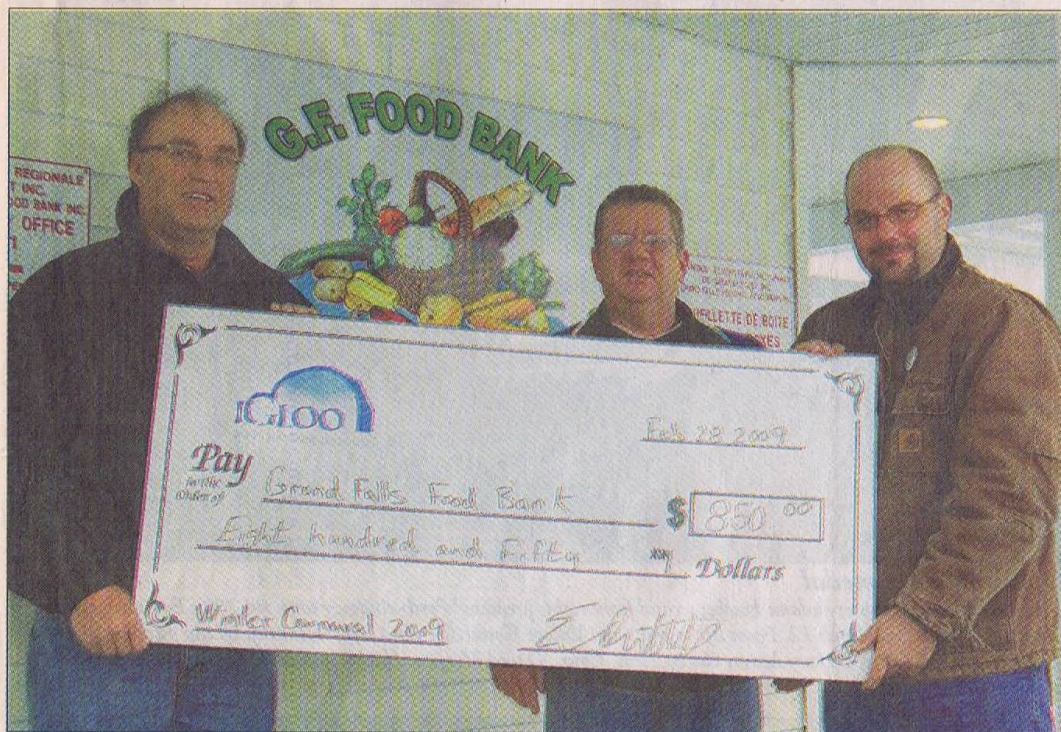
"It's the symbol of the park. It means so much to see the trails cleared, the road redone and the fire tower restored. Some of those historic cabins were there for more than 100 years."

Mulherin said 2008's wet soggy summer was not a great camping season, and she hopes with good weather more visitors will journey to Mount Carleton.

"I have had calls and emails from people as far away as Florida expressing an interest and wanting to join the Friends of Mount Carleton."

The volunteer group hopes to have their charitable status approved this year and the group is continuing their efforts to provide educational information for the new interpretive centre at Armstrong Brook, and is completing a history of Mount Carleton.

Mulherin said the Friends of Mount Carleton are also seeking volunteers who would like to help with park trail blazing or conducting educational programs for school children or other groups. More information on the volunteer group can be found at www.friendsofmountcarleton.ca.



Donates to food bank

Glenn Rioux, left, president of the Grand Falls Regional Food Bank, holds a giant cheque in the amount of \$850, presented by Gaston Boucher and Eric Ouellette, right, on behalf of the igloo building competition organizing committee. The competition was held recently during the Grand Falls Winter Carnival. \$1 from the \$5 button sold at the competition went towards the donation. (Madeleine Leclerc photo)



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