

Thinkers' Lodge gets \$1m restoration

Pugwash house to have museum, conference space

By MICHAEL GORMAN Truro Bureau
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Paul Brenciaglia, nephew of Cyrus Eaton, attends Thursday's announcement of \$1 million for the restoration of Thinkers' Lodge in Pugwash. (MICHAEL GORMAN / Truro Bureau)

PUGWASH — Paolo Brenciaglia remembers well the summers he worked at Thinkers' Lodge.

In 1956, at the age of 16, he travelled to Pugwash from Rome for the first time to work for his mother's uncle, industrialist Cyrus Eaton. He returned the next year and was there when his great-uncle hosted some of the world's most respected scientists as they talked about — among other things — the prospect of a world without nuclear weapons.

The meeting led to the creation of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World

Affairs. Brenciaglia hopes the spirit of that original meeting can be recaptured as Thinkers' Lodge, purchased by Eaton in 1929, undergoes a \$1-million restoration.

Cumberland-Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley MP Scott Armstrong announced \$750,000 in federal funding for the project on Thursday while standing in Eaton's home, overlooking the Northumberland Strait.

The federal money comes from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Other funding includes \$121,000 from the Cumberland Regional Economic Development Association, \$50,000 from the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, \$50,000 from the Pugwash Park Commission and \$30,000 from the province.

"Thinkers' Lodge is known as the birthplace of the Pugwash movement, a transnational organization that led the movement for a nuclear-free world and for which it received the 1995 Nobel Prize for Peace," Armstrong said.

The project includes the restoration of the seven-bedroom-seven-bathroom house, architectural work for the lobster factory-dining hall that is also on the property, a marketing strategy, business plan and interpretive master plan.

The house has been stripped to its studs for a complete restoration. Finished sections have been sealed off and plastic covers newly installed moulding while the rest of the work is completed.

Rhonda Kelly, executive director of the development association, said the work is to be completed by the end of March and the goal is creating a site that serves as an interpretive museum and a place to host conferences and educational programming.

Kelly said they want to capitalize on the international history of the location, try to recapture that status and perhaps pursue it as a culture heritage site.

"It's the one place you can point to globally as a physical location where the movement for nuclear disarmament began," she said.

Brenciaglia said he spent his summers cutting the grass, overseeing the social hour and building a tennis court. He also spent some time in the company of some of the world's most esteemed scientists and thinkers and they made an impression on him that remains even today.

"It was probably the best six months of my life," he said. "They were trying to get the world to talk about disarmament and peace."

He believes that spirit is needed as much today as it was then.

"We need it again. I hope that conferences will be generated here. I hope that we will talk about the environment. . . It's important to renew the spirit of this place."

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