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Bluenose II chip-shape

Iconic schooner's hull went through wood chipper during restoration

By BEVERLEY WARE South Shore Bureau | EXCLUSIVE

Tue, Dec 7 - 4:53 AM



Prime Minister Stephen Harper, left, is escorted by Peter Kinley of the Lunenburg Foundry as he tours the restoration of Bluenose II in Lunenburg on Aug. 18. The schooner's hull has since been put through a wood chipper. (ANDREW VAUGHAN / CP)



Bluenose II enters Halifax harbour on May 29, 2001. (ANDREW VAUGHAN / CP)



Workers at a Lunenburg boatyard look over remnants of the Bluenose II. Only the masts, sails, rigging, ironwork and railings were able to be salvaged during the restoration of the iconic schooner. (BEVERLEY WARE South Shore Bureau)

LUNENBURG — Much of the Bluenose II has gone through a wood chipper, 16 years after more than 80 per cent of the hull was replaced.

What's left of the iconic schooner now lies in two Lunenburg County boatyards. That includes the masts, the sails, the rigging, ironwork and railings.

But the sagging hull has been torn apart and taken to a recycling depot, where it was put through a chipper.

Michael Noonan, spokesman for the provincial Tourism, Culture and Heritage Department, said the Lunenburg Shipyard Alliance, a consortium of three companies carrying out the refit, was told it had to destroy any wood not used in the restoration.

"The requirement for it to be destroyed was to ensure that material is not scavenged and used to generate profits through retail sale, etc.," Noonan said in an email interview.

The wood was deemed construction waste. Environmental rules require the material be taken to a recycling depot and put through a chipper, he said.

Noonan said a small amount of wood may be used by the Lunenburg Marine Museum Society, which operates the Bluenose II for the province, for promotion at a visitor centre. It will be open to the public across from the construction site on Lunenburg's waterfront.

Joan Roue's great-grandfather, William Roue, designed the original Bluenose.

"It is simply unimaginable that a national icon has apparently been discarded like garbage and then put through a wood chipper," she said.

The Bluenose II provided a historic link between the replica and the original, she said, having played host to prime ministers, Bluenose Capt. Angus Walters, her great-grandfather, and sailors and

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shipwrights from the Bluenose.

"It is indeed a sad day to realize these valuable links to our heritage are gone," Roue said.

She had hoped to build a replica of the celebrated racing and fishing vessel. She was told she would have to call her schooner Bluenose IV because the province owns the rights to the name Bluenose III, but she put her plans on hold when the province announced it would restore Bluenose II.

Roue questions whether this project can be called a restoration, given the extent of the work.

She said unless her great-grandfather's design lines were used, "the vessel should not be called Bluenose anything — period. Using the name would imply a pedigree much too precious to be tinkered with."

Noonan said the keel, ribs and planking are all new, but it is not yet known how much of the decking and structures on deck can be reused.

"That part of the construction work has yet to begin so how much will be reused is yet to be determined."

He said everything that can be reused will be, including hatches, covers and masts.

The Bluenose II was built in 1963 for \$250,000 by the Oland family and later taken over by the Tourism Department as a sailing ambassador for the province. It was built with the same materials as the original, though schooners were not built to last long since they were often lost in storms.

The Bluenose II fell into such disrepair that she was not certified to sail. The department decided to scuttle her and she ended up tied to the wharf behind the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg, stripped of everything but her engines and generators.

Sen. Wilfred Moore spearheaded formation of the Bluenose II Preservation Trust Society to save her. It raised \$500,000, restored the hull and had it sailing again by early 1995 at a cost of \$90,000 to Nova Scotia taxpayers.

Some of that work was done at the Lunenburg Shipyard, the same place where the current refit will be completed. The shipyard describes that earlier refit on its website:

"Bluenose II was extensively rebuilt at Lunenburg Shipyard at a fraction of the cost of replacement. Over 80 per cent of her frames and planking were renewed. Later, the decks and deck house were rebuilt, new spars added," and then new gear boxes, shafts and propellers were installed.

That equipment, including the engines, is being replaced.

The Bluenose II was built with several different types of wood, including spruce, red oak, Douglas fir and mahogany. The new hull is being made primarily of angelique, an extremely hard and rot-resistant wood found in the Amazon rain forest.

Noonan said the province is using the latest wooden boat materials and techniques.

The Bluenose II was hauled ashore in August at the Lunenburg Shipyard, beside the former Smith and Rhuland boatyard where she was built. There's nothing left of the vessel there today, but workers are building a marine railroad and a temporary structure to house the Bluenose during the remainder of the refit so visitors can watch the work being done.

The shipyard gets to keep the new facilities, which cost about \$1.5 million and are included in the \$14.8-million price tag.

Roue said it would have been more practical for the province to keep the Bluenose II sailing while it built the new hull, then just transfer what it was keeping from the old vessel to the new when the hull was complete. The original Bluenose II could then have been kept as a monument on Lunenburg's waterfront, she said.

Roue also questions what blueprints the province is using to restore the schooner. Her family gave the preservation trust society copyright for the vessel's design when it carried out the refit in 1994 to ensure the hull and rigging were exactly the same.

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Roue said her family offered the plans to the province for use in this restoration, "but our proposal was flatly declined."

Noonan said the engineering firm contracted to develop plans for the restoration made new drawings because of some changes to the interior and modifications to the deck.

"Bluenose II was never an exact replica of the schooner Bluenose, more of a representation," said Noonan.

"That continues to be the case with this restoration. But, at the end of the day, when she returns to sailing in 2012, the public will recognize her as Bluenose II."

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