

Acton student makes the grade on the high seas

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Staff Writer

When teenager Lauren Harrison looks out her classroom window this fall, the view will be vastly different than the one she's experienced for the past three years at Acton District High School.



LAUREN HARRISON

The 17-year-old Harrison has been accepted into the Nova Scotia-based West Island College Class Afloat education program, meaning she'll spend half her senior year of high school on a tall ship named The Concordia.

A group of about 48 students will sail to 22 ports in five months on

the Atlantic Ocean, from France to Brazil, covering the Grade 12 curriculum along the way in a classroom on the 180-foot-tall vessel. Shore time will also serve as school time, with the construction of a school in the African country of Senegal on the itinerary as a humanitarian project.

"It's going to be pretty rigorous. I have to take 11 courses, which is going to be tough because we have to keep our average over 80 or we get kicked out," Harrison said.

"We also have to clean the ship every day and from what I'm hearing it's going to be intense, but I think it'll be worth it."



The tall ship The Concordia will act as a floating classroom for 48 students, including Acton's Lauren Harrison. The local teen was recently accepted into the Nova Scotia-based West Island College Class Afloat education program.

Harrison departed from St. Pierre & Miquelon last week and is scheduled to make ports of call in Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Morocco, Senegal, crossing the Atlantic to finish the tour in Cabedelo, Brazil in late January.

The group will then return to Canada and complete the second semester in Lunenburg, N.S., while The Concordia takes on a class of Grade 11 students and sails back to its home base by the end of June.

Harrison, who would like to pursue a career in engineering or science, applied for the Class Afloat program for the Grade 11 year but wasn't accepted, so she cried with delight upon learning she'd made it the second time around.

"It's going to be amazing. I have a motorboat but I've never sailed before, so it'll be a lot of fun to learn," said Harrison, who'll be required to work and keep watch on the ship for a couple of hours on most days.

"I love traveling and meeting new people, plus it will really set me apart for university. I really love scuba diving and I'm

looking forward to stopping at the ports like Morocco where we can do that. I'm a bit nervous about going and I'm sure I'll get sick at the beginning. The first storm will be pretty terrifying. I've been on Facebook with five of the other students and only one has sailed before, so I won't be the only one."

The students underwent an extensive application process before being awarded the \$18,000 scholarship. Harrison figures that there'll be bouts with homesickness along the way too, having never been away for such an extended period.

"Being without family and friends will be weird and I'm definitely giving up a lot at home to do this," she added. "I ski five or six days a week and to not be able to do that all winter will be brutal. But when we're in Nova Scotia, they'll be doing a lot of fun things like white-water rafting and one-day trips. I'll be making a whole lot of new friends and it's going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

(Eamonn Maher can be reached at emaher@independentfreepress.com)

Capital budget highest in Town history

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Factors affecting the operating budget:

- dropping assessment growth—projected at a lowly 2 per cent (only \$500,000) from a high 4.4 per cent in 2006.
- decreased revenues in investments income, \$100,000 and corporate revenues, \$150,000
- \$140,000 increase in fuel costs and \$140,000 increase for utilities
- \$1.1 million in compensation costs
- inflation impact on goods and services

To compensate staff will consider such things as increased user fees (\$175,000) and increased parking enforcement. The budget will not include any staffing increases, program expansions or new equipment purchases.

DeSousa warned budgets would not get any easier in the next couple of years, with projections of increases in the 4-5 per cent range for 2010 and 2011.

Bonnette wondered whether the Town should be budgeting based on growth and the subsequent assessment dollars that fill Town coffers.

"To me I don't know if that's the right way we should be budgeting—on how much growth we get," said Bonnette. "I think it should be based on zero growth and if we get two per cent, then that's a bonus."

DeSousa replied most municipalities, such as Halton Hills, base their budgets on assessment growth because it's a source of revenue. He said staff could look at the alternative in future budgets.

"We're almost there (zero per cent) now," muttered the Mayor.

The 2009 operating budget deliberations open on January 6 with a staff presentation and public delegation night—when residents can come have their say. Committee debate follows on Jan. 12 and 13, with council approval on Jan. 19.

This coming year's capital budget will be the highest in the town's history—\$25.4 million, said DeSousa. It includes \$12 million for the expansion and renovation of the Cultural Centre and Library.

A recent Investing in Ontario grant of \$2.48 million will be split equally between 2009 and 2010 capital budgets, allowing more projects to be completed. The money won't go to the library project, because that would reduce the amount of development charges the Town could use to pay for its expansion and renovation.

Budget committee's (all members of council) consideration of the 2009 capital budget will begin on Nov. 17 and 18. Public delegation night will be on Nov. 17. Council approval is expected in December.

NDP, Green Party bring back familiar faces

Two additional candidates have entered the race for the Wellington-Halton Hills seat in the upcoming federal election.

Fergus resident Noel Duignan is the NDP candidate, and Brent Bouteiller, also of Fergus, is running for the Green Party.

Both Duignan and Bouteiller ran unsuccessfully in the riding during the 2006 federal election.

Duignan, 59, was acclaimed NDP candidate at a meeting in Rockwood last Thursday.

Duignan, formerly of Georgetown, previously served as NDP MPP for Halton North from 1990 to 1995 and ran federally for the NDP in both the 2004 and 2006 federal elections.

He is separated, the father of four boys, and works as a real estate consultant/mediator.

"I decided to run because we need some leadership in Ottawa," said Duignan, adding the economy is nearly in a recession.



NOEL DUIGNAN

Bouteiller, 40, was selected as the Green Party candidate in February. He is a professional engineer who has been practising transportation engineering since 1990, recently started his own practice and is working on asset management of tangible capital assets for local municipalities. He also runs a model railway retail business.

He is president of the Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington and been a member of Transport 2000 since 1990. He received his engineering degree from Carleton University.

Bouteiller ran unsuccessfully as Waterloo-Wellington Green Party candidate in the 1999



BRENT BOUTEILLER

provincial and 2000, 2004 and 2006 federal elections. He also ran unsuccessfully for a local council seat in Centre Wellington during the 2003 and 2006 municipal election.

Bouteiller is married to Eliza Crosland. They have two children.

He decided to run this time to continue, "to build on the previous growth that we had."

"We want to get out there and present our message on a strong economy and a clean environment at the same time," he said.

Candidates who have previously announced their bid for the Wellington-Halton Hills seat are incumbent Conservative Michael Chong and Liberal Bruce Bowser.

GEORGETOWN TOYOTA
GAME OF THE WEEK

GEORGETOWN JR. A RAIDERS
vs
BRAMALEA BLUES
Saturday, September 20, 2008
7:30 pm
Mold-Masters SportsPlex (Alcott Arena)

GEORGETOWN JUNIOR "A"



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