

BAKED DESPAIR

High food prices force Haiti's poor to eat mud cookies. LOCAL/LIFESTYLES / 28



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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2008

\$1.00 (HOME DELIVERED: 61 CENTS A DAY)

FLOOD WATCH

AMPHIBEX DONE

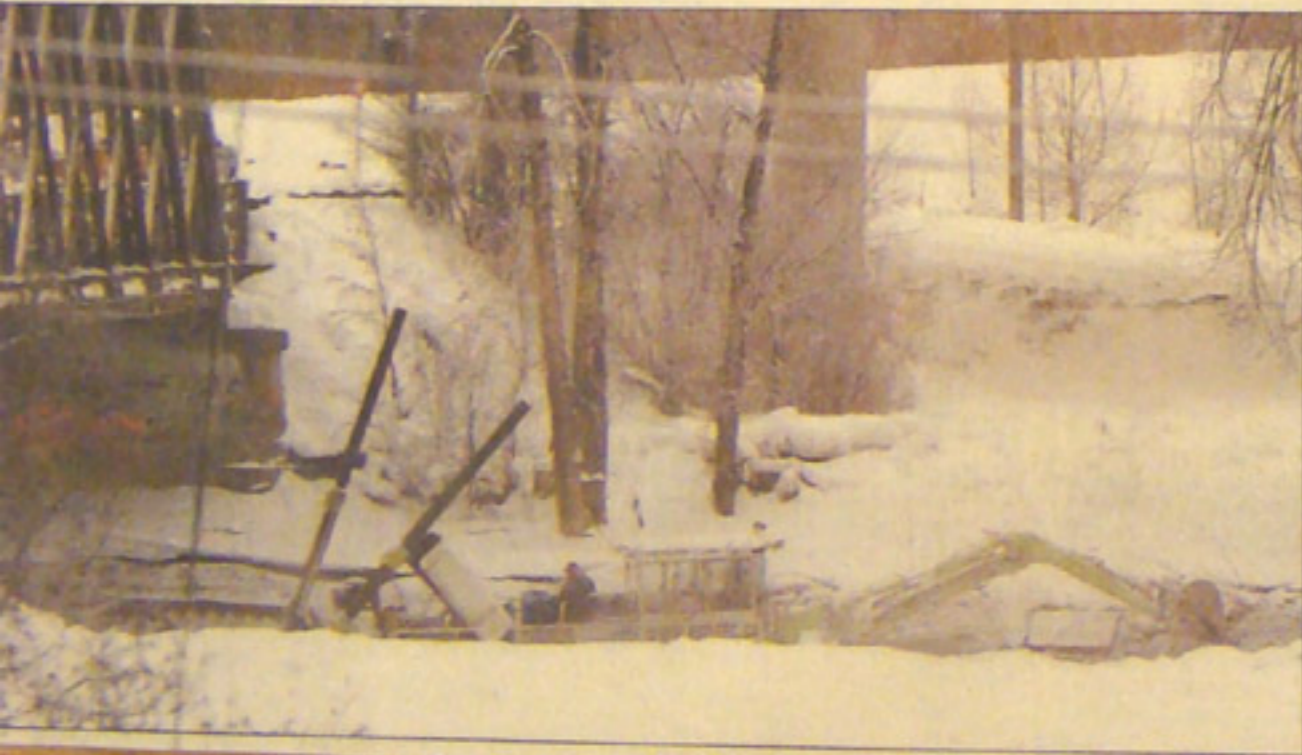
by MARK NIELSEN
Citizen staff

The Amphibex floating excavator will be heading home after helping to open a substantial channel through the Nechako River ice jam, city liaison officer Kevin Brown said Tuesday. Officials decided against extending the contract beyond the 10 days originally agreed upon in part because there is now no place for the ice to go with the Fraser River frozen over due to the ongoing extreme cold.

Safety concerns — the machine was “spun

around like a toy,” Brown said, when large chunks broke lose over the weekend — and the warm water system to be in full operation today were also reasons the machine will no longer be deployed. Eco Technologies Ltd. of Pigeon Hill, N.B., will receive \$300,000 — plus another \$75,000 for other services — from the Provincial Emergency Program for the work it did. The machine was on the water for nine of the 10 days it was in Prince George — it was forced to the shoreline when the ice began to jam up on the Fraser. But Brown said it was worth the expense, noting a channel has been established that stretches about 10 kilometres upstream and past the John Hart Bridge thanks to the Amphibex.

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Citizen photo by Brent Braaten
The Amphibex sits next to the Cameron Street bridge in the Nechako River.

‘It did a great job’

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“The Amphibex story, in my mind, is all about modern-day technology working with Mother Nature to create what is now a long, open channel that gives the water some place to go, and the water level has dropped substantially,” he said. “So the little green grasshopper was able to work only nine days, but you know what, it did a great job.”

The Amphibex remained in the water at the Cameron Street Bridge as of Tuesday evening but is expected to be loaded onto a flatbed truck today.

With the machine gone, it’s now up to the warm water system to keep a channel open at the jam’s lower end. Water 14 C in temperature will be pumped onto the ice from the Canfor pumphouse, about 2.5 km upriver from the confluence on the Nechako’s north side.

Fed by the ongoing cold — lows in the -20 C range are expected through to Thursday night — the jam’s growth spurt continued Tuesday, as it advanced more than four kilometres. As of late Tuesday afternoon, the jam stretched nearly 27 kilometres, reaching the Bergman Road area in Miworth.

Fraser-Fort George Regional District external relations manager Renee McCloskey said there’s been little change since five households along Old Takla Road were told to be prepared to move out to avoid being stranded if the river gets too high. The houses themselves are on high ground, she added.