

# Riverview gets natural gas

■ \$5M plan aims to have gas flowing by fall, 1,000 homes, 50 businesses connected by 2010

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Natural gas could be flowing underneath the Petitcodiac River and into homes and businesses in Riverview later this fall, according to Enbridge Gas New Brunswick.

Enbridge Gas plans to invest \$5 million to expand into Riverview and the company predicts it will have 1,000 residences and more than 50 businesses hooked onto natural gas within the next five years.

Mark Wies, Enbridge's manager of marketing, said the company is in the process of filing the necessary paperwork and preparing the public consultation process for the development. Barring any setbacks

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Enbridge could have the necessary approvals in place by September.

Wies said the company wants to build before the end of the year a pipeline between six and nine kilometres in length along Coverdale Road going toward Hillsborough.

"So, if we move ahead we will have gas flowing by the end of this year along Coverdale Road. We will, in the spring, start expanding out from Coverdale Road," he said. "We build on the demand so, wherever the most interest comes from, that is where we build first."

Enbridge has 4,000 natural gas customers in Moncton, Dieppe, Fredericton, Oromocto, Saint John, St. Stephen and St. George. Metro Moncton accounts for almost half of the province's natural gas clientele with 1,500 customers using the fuel.

Wies said the company is excited about the expansion and said Energy Minister Bruce Fitch, who is also the Riverview MLA, was extremely supportive of the plans.

Fitch said Enbridge's success is a victory for him on many levels.

"It's double good news for me because it is great as MLA for Riverview and great as the energy minister to understand from Enbridge Gas that they plan to expand into Riverview," he said.

What is still to be decided is how the natural gas will actually get across the Petitcodiac River. Wies said the pipe will go under the river but the exact process is still to be determined.

The Enbridge official said it has become easier to convince people to convert to natural gas in the last three years. Switching to natural gas will save a customer 20 to 30 per cent if they previously heated their home with oil or roughly 10 per cent for those with electric heat.

NB Power's decision to increase power rates three times in the last 15 months has also made Enbridge's pitch to move over to natural gas easier, according to Wies.

"We have seen the interest being sparked a little bit over the past number of months with the uncertainty over electricity rates. There is no question at all," he said. "People are starting to understand that there is a correlation between world energy prices and electricity prices. That has become more public because of the NB Power process over the past few months."