

Natural gas makes its way into Riverview

■ Enbridge gets OK to put pipeline under river; first customers should be hooked up by year's end

BY CRAIG BABSTOCK
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

Enbridge Gas New Brunswick is wasting little time breaking into the Riverview market.

If it wasn't for a snowstorm in Winnipeg earlier this week, they'd already have their gas pipeline half way across the Petitcodiac River.

Enbridge officials and local politicians were present at Riverview Town Hall yesterday morning for the long-awaited announcement that natural gas is crossing the river. General manager Andrew Harrington announced that the company was granted approval recently by the New Brunswick Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities to extend natural gas services to Riverview.

"We expect before year-end to provide service to our first customer in Riverview," said Harrington.

The only thing standing in their way is the weather. If it stays clear, they can meet their schedule.

After the official remarks, Enbridge marketing manager Mark Wies said work was supposed to begin this week to lay a gas pipeline under the Petitcodiac River. But the Winnipeg drilling company that was hired got snowed in by an early winter storm, so work will begin Monday.

The pipeline will be connected to the main line underground, along Salisbury Road. It will travel under the river, just east of the causeway, and will connect with another pipeline that will run up and down Coverdale Road.

Wies said if the weather cooperates, it will only take two weeks to cross the river. Trucks and equipment were already gathered just off the West Main traffic circle yesterday doing planning and prep work for the pipeline. An environmental impact assessment has been done on the work, and Enbridge made some minor adjustments to the plan, based on the findings.



Enbridge Operations Supervisor Todd Scott and Riverview Director of Corporate Services and Economic Development Brenda Orchard chat about the path that the natural gas extension line will take into the community this fall.

Wies said they've taken into account the fact changes to the causeway and river flow may be coming down the road and are burying the pipe deeper than it would normally go, so it will be out of the way no matter what option is selected for the river. It will be installed in the riverbed using a horizontal directional drill.

Besides the pipeline crossing the river, Enbridge plans to lay 6.5 km of pipe by the end of the year. About four kilometres of that will go on Coverdale Road, from the new bridge to Craig Court, half a kilometre will run along Pine Glen Road and almost two kilometres will travel up Cleveland Avenue.

It's too early to say how many customers will have natural gas by the end of this year, but the company expects the gas to be flowing, if the infrastructure stays on schedule.

In 2006, they'll lay pipe on Buckingham, as far south as White Pine Road. They'll also move into some existing residential neighbourhoods and into new homes in

subdivisions under construction. The company expects to lay 20 km of pipe in 2006 and hook up 100 residential customers and 20 commercial customers.

"We expect to have more than 1,000 residential customers signed up and using natural gas by 2009 and more than 50 commercial customers," said Wies.

Riverview will join Moncton, Dieppe, Fredericton, Oromocto, Saint John, St. George and St. Stephen as the only municipalities in New Brunswick receiving natural gas. Harrington said there will be \$6 million in economic spin-off for Riverview over the next five years, from the infrastructure construction to the equipment installation at homes.

The town was pleased to welcome Enbridge. Mayor Clarence Sweetland said between the natural gas announcement and today's opening of the new bridge, this has been a big week for Riverview.

"This announcement by Enbridge puts us on an equal playing field with the other communities



Enbridge crews work on the extension of the natural gas line to Riverview yesterday. The line will run parallel to the causeway, then run both east and west along Coverdale Road and possibly even up Pine Glen Road in work planned to be completed this fall.

that have natural gas," said the mayor.

New Brunswick Energy Minister and Riverview MLA Bruce Fitch said diversification is important in helping to meet the energy needs of the province.

Supply problems during peak times are an issue and Fitch said if more people switch to natural gas, it takes the pressure off existing power supplies.

"Natural gas is an alternative and a solution to some of the problems we're facing," said the minister.

Fitch said if the province had to build a new power plant to cover

the peak periods, such as the coldest months of winter, it would cost millions of dollars. But if more customers switch to natural gas, it will reduce the peak demand.

Enbridge's Harrington was also quick to point out the environmental benefits of natural gas. He said if a homeowner converts from oil to gas, it will reduce the annual greenhouse gas output by three tonnes. If a home powered on electricity switched to natural gas, it would reduce greenhouse gases by 12 tonnes per year.

"We all understand and accept that natural gas is the cleanest of the fossil fuels," said Harrington.