

Sept 8/05 HF-Development

Riverview gas pipeline rerouted

■ **Natural gas line moved to avoid environmental obstacles; Town to be hooked up this year with 1,400 homes, businesses served within four years**

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As Enbridge Gas New Brunswick prepares to send natural gas to Riverview, it is responding to residents concerns by moving its proposed pipeline over 10 metres to avoid some existing environmental obstacles.

Pending regulatory approval, Enbridge aims to have a natural gas pipeline across the Petitcodiac River this year with more than 1,400 homes and 60 business plugged into its system

within four years. Mark Wies, Enbridge's manager for marketing, said the company is forging ahead with its plans after holding a local public forum and undergoing a full environmental impact assessment.

"We are crossing over from the traffic circle on the Moncton side," Wies said. "It was pointed out by one of our stakeholders that there may be some trees and some rocks that would obstruct the pipe and we would have to remove them. That was potentially a concern." The submerged pipeline will cross the river and Enbridge will hook up houses and businesses along Coverdale Road.

The natural gas company had several options open to send the gas over to Riverview, such as attaching the pipe to the causeway or running alongside it. Wies said the initial plan of building the pipeline beside the causeway

was altered after the public session when the potential environmental barriers were pointed out.

The Enbridge official said all the options were approved in its environmental impact assessment.

Energy Minister Bruce Fitch said he appreciated Enbridge listening to local residents' concerns. And now the energy minister is looking forward to his constituents having the chance to tap into natural gas, especially at a time when electricity and home heating fuel costs continue to rise.

"When I was mayor I was working on this file. So the fact I can see it through now as minister is very satisfying," Fitch said.

"It is significant because it is something new for Riverview and something the other communities in the Greater Moncton area were already

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taking advantage of."

Along with permission to cross into Riverview, Enbridge has applied to the Public Utilities Board for a rate increase.

Enbridge sells natural gas to its customers by the gigajoule (GJ), which roughly equals 25 litres of furnace oil. The average home using natural gas for central heating and hot water consumes 9.5 GJ a month, which would bring their natural gas bill to \$110; Additionally there is the 5.44-cent per gigajoule

delivery charge (\$51.71) plus the \$12 distribution cost, which could rise to \$16 if the PUB accepts Enbridge's rate change application.

NB Power has announced it plans to raise its electricity rates again in 2006. And at least one energy analyst has pegged the increase in home heating fuel at 35 per cent in the last year.

The Enbridge official said it is difficult to compare natural gas prices to those in other provinces, such as Ontario and Nova Scotia, because they calculate their prices differently

A top concern raised by many potential natural gas converts is the long-term supply of the fuel. According to Enbridge, North America has 75 years of natural gas reserves at current consumption rates. The company said North America has consistently had 10-year supplies of natural gas but as more is used, new gas reserves are discovered.

The long-term supply of natural gas has become even more secure with the new liquefied natural gas terminal heading to Saint John, as well as others proposed in Nova

Scotia and Maine.

The province's energy minister said people should not be concerned about converting to natural gas and having the flow run out in a few years.

"You have a number of LNG terminals that are being proposed for New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. And you have the fact that there is not just Sable (Island Offshore Energy Project), you have also got a number of other projects, it is a world product that is being processed," Fitch said. "Supply is not an issue."