

## **Enbridge makes presentation to council:**

Enbridge Gas made a presentation to Merrickville-Wolford council at the last meeting, outlining their commitment to working with the municipality to get natural gas to the north side of the river in Merrickville.

Enbridge has done a feasibility study on supplying natural gas to the north side, something that has been a focus for this council since they were elected last year. Enbridge representative, Ian Ross, said that, according to their calculations, they will need an investment of \$1.7 million to service an estimated 50 homes across the river. This is assuming that 60% of the homes in that area of Merrickville sign up for natural gas services once it is offered.

It has been calculated that this would cost each home-owner on the north side an estimated \$35,000 without government funding. Luckily, the municipality is working with Enbridge to put together an application to the Ontario Energy Board's (OEB) program, which has committed \$130 million to support new natural gas expansion projects from 2021-2023.

Mayor Doug Struthers seems to be optimistic about the Municipality's chance of receiving a grant from the Ontario government for this project. He says Merrickville-Wolford hits the nail on the head for 6 out of the 7 criteria outlined by the OEB to be considered for the funding.

Enbridge is currently gathering all the information needed to make an application for funding on behalf of themselves and the municipality. "We are just putting together a few more letters that are needed," Ian Ross told council. "We are going to get this project on the list."

## **Council approves 10 per cent increase in water rates**

New water rates for 2020, an increase of 10%:

The decision to raise the water rates by 10% is based on a resolution passed in 2016 aimed at working towards full cost recovery for the wastewater treatment system. The council of the day approved a minimum 10% increase every year until 2021 to ensure the system achieves sustainability on a user-pay basis in accordance with legislation.

Treasurer Kirsten Rahm said at the meeting that the system is very close to achieving full cost recovery, however she suggested that council stick with the 10% rate increase to help build up their infrastructure reserve. According to the municipal report, the reserve currently sits at \$70,000, when the costs of capital work on underground infrastructure would suggest that the amount in the reserve should be between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000. "At this point, we need to focus on capital reserves for wastewater and sewer," Kirsten said. "We haven't previously been in a position to set aside funding."

During the public question period, resident Mike Zaversnuk inquired about council's commitment to hiring a consultant to look into the high water rates in the municipality. CAO Doug Robertson said that the process is underway, as they are currently finalizing the wording for the RFP to hire a consultant to do the assessment.

Resident Pat Watson was also keen to see the hiring of the consultant, as she remembered a specific councillor stating during the election that there would be a chance for rate-payers to ask questions and get answers about the high water rates in the municipality. "We are paying \$5 a day for water and sewer," she said. "Can the users hope for any relief?"

While Kirsten said she could not promise that this would be the end of the 10% rate increases, Mayor Doug Struthers did mention the possible residential development proposed by Park View Homes, which will be hooking up to the water and sewer system should be project go ahead. "There would be relief from those 98 units," he said.

