

NATURAL GAS SPURS DEBATE AT COUNCIL TABLE

By **Hilary Thomson** - May 22, 2019

Councillor Timothy Molloy brought a motion forward at the council meeting of May 13 to increase efforts to get natural gas to the north side of the Rideau Canal in Merrickville. This has been on Councillor Molloy's radar for a long time, even before he sat around the council table for this term. He sees the expansion of natural gas to the north side as an important part of Merrickville-Wolford's economic future.

"We need to bring industry [to the Village] to bring taxes down," he said at the meeting. "Nothing is going to happen without natural gas."

His suggestion is that council take a more proactive approach by talking to MPP Steve Clark, and maybe even MP Michael Barrett, about lobbying Enbridge to invest in the north side of the Rideau Canal in Merrickville, something that they have not been keen on in the past. Councillor Molloy believes that Minister Clark has been helping other municipalities in Ontario attract Enbridge, and Merrickville-Wolford should be no different.

"They are leaving us out in the cold," he says, adding that those in higher levels of government are not going to help if council doesn't ask.

Councillor Bob Foster agreed with Councillor Molloy that having natural gas on the north side of the Canal is key to attracting development. However, he was unsure about whether Minister Clark would be of any assistance. "I am in no disagreement at all, but can Steve Clark do us any good?" he asked.

Deputy Mayor Michael Cameron spoke up at the meeting, saying that he doesn't feel that any further action is currently needed for this initiative. Staff are already in active communication with Enbridge about the possibility of them investing in the area, and are in the process of getting them more information about a pipe that already runs under the Canal and that could be used to bring natural gas to the north side.

Mayor Doug Struthers also mentioned at a previous meeting that he had talked to Minister Clark at the AMO conference at the beginning of the year about the issue. "It's been addressed, and all the ducks have been lined up," Deputy Mayor Cameron said at the meeting. "Enbridge is a private business and, if they saw good business, they would be knocking at our door."

Councillor Molloy believes that it is Minister Clark's job to plead the case for his constituent municipalities with Enbridge. However, Mayor Struthers disagrees. "He is not going to pressure the private sector to move forward," he said at the meeting. "That's not the way the system works."

Mayor Struthers said that he believes Councillor Molloy's motion is premature, and that the municipality is currently doing all they can to attract Enbridge to invest across the Canal. When it came down to a vote, the motion was defeated, with Councillor Foster and Councillor Molloy supporting the motion and Mayor Struthers, Deputy Mayor Cameron and Councillor Don Halpenny voting against it.

Staff will maintain the status quo and continue to liaise with Enbridge in the hopes of getting them to expand services across the Canal. Even though the motion for increased pressure was defeated, it seems as though all councillors agree that getting natural gas to the north side of the Canal would be a positive for Merrickville's economy and something they all support. "We will continue to engage with Enbridge and give them all the information they need," says Mayor Struthers.

Hilary Thomson

