

Gas price hike puts Ganong Bros. in tough spot

■ 'Jobs at risk' says CEO

BY KATHY BOCKUS
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ST. STEPHEN – The decision late last week by the province's Energy and Utilities Board to allow Enbridge Gas New Brunswick to increase its distribution rates has struck a sour note with a local candy manufacturing company.

"We are extremely disappointed in the rate increase," said Doug Ettinger, CEO of Ganong Bros. Limited. "It's putting us at risk. There's no doubt about it."

Ettinger said the rate increase will make the company hard pressed to compete effectively in the global confectionery market and may force it to make some serious decisions regarding jobs, purchase of new equipment and

marketing strategies.

The EUB has allowed Enbridge a two-tiered rate increase, one to take effect this year in July, the next in July of 2011.

Within those rate increases, commercial customers that use more than 22,000 gigajoules pay one rate; those which use fewer pay another.

In May, the EUB approved a hike for residential customers which saw a delivery rate price rise of about 10 per cent for residential customers, while the delivery rate for small commercial customers rose about 23 per cent.

This final decision will see rates rise a total of 115 per cent over current costs.

Ettinger said Ganong has the highest natural gas distribution costs in North America, 20 times higher than its competitors elsewhere.

When the company switched to natural gas in 2005 in an effort to be environmentally supportive, its rate was 79 cents per gigajoule.

"With this new increase, our rate will be \$6.43 per gigajoule in July and \$8.79 by July of 2011," said Ettinger. "That is a 1,000 per cent increase that is clearly, clearly unacceptable."

"It can't be sustained, it's not helpful to anybody and it's an increase we cannot pass on to our customers."

Ettinger noted that Enbridge New Brunswick's debt is at \$150 million "and growing" when it was supposed to be capped at \$13 million for capital expenditures and losses.

He said in 2008 Enbridge reported revenue of \$27 million and dividends paid to its shareholders of \$21 million. "That's a business model I'm not familiar with. I must have missed that course," said Ettinger.

He described Ganong Bros. as a fairly small player in the global market, "a price follower rather than a price leader."

The company will have to absorb the rate increase and "that puts jobs at risk," Ettinger explained. The company would not remain competitive if it could not invest in new equipment or new marketing avenues and if the company doesn't remain competitive that means fewer jobs.

He said the company is now taking a serious look at returning to light fuel oil for energy because the supposed savings in natural gas are theoretical rather than real.

"We are doing some very important calculations as we speak," said Ettinger, saying the change over to fuel oil could be done "literally in a day or so."

"It's not really where we want to be but where we're pushed to."

SPCA volunteer praised

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
"They need to be groomed, some have sores, some have abscesses and they all need to be spayed and neutered."

Howard said many of the rabbits had fur mites and eye infections as well. The network people will take care of the rabbits' needs.

Paul Melanson, NBSPCA chief inspector, said the SPCA was called in to assist the RCMP and Social Services in investigating a home in Oranoch.

No charges will be filed against the owners of the home where the rabbits were seized, he said.

Melanson said most of the rabbits were running loose in the home occupied by a family. He's pleased the HRN became involved. He said if it hadn't been there is every likelihood many of the rabbits would have had to be euthanized.

Howard said rabbits make wonderful house pets. They're social, have personality and can be litter box trained. "They are companion animals. They don't belong in the backyard in a hutch, they don't belong with spinners who will pluck their wool, they are companions just like a dog or cat."

She said they must never be kept on wood chips because the pine and cedar shavings emit an odour, toxic to the rabbits which can cause liver and kidney damage.

Howard praised Flaherty for also helping smooth the road for the bunnies venturing across the border that resulted in what she called a "bunny memo" being issued to the U.S. border guards that allowed for ease of transport from St. Stephen into Calais and beyond.

She said there was a network of people who met her and Clarke Saturday afternoon; people from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New York.

Some of the rabbits were flown to New York State in private planes by the Pilots and Paws volunteer network.

On the road again after van fire

BY KATHY BOCKUS
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WAWEIG – Ricky Hachey is a happy man.

Thanks to the Internet, insurance and the generosity of residents in the St. Stephen area, he's on the road again in another van, complete with a wheelchair lift.

"It's just overwhelming, the help and support we've received," said Hachey's mother, Rita.

"The generosity is amazing," said Dorien Hachey, Ricky's father.

On May 20, the Hachey's customized van was destroyed in a freak fire in the middle of St. Stephen. Ricky and his caregiver, Stacey Atkinson, were driving up Marks Street in the 1997 Ford

Explorer when people began shouting at them that the van was on fire.

Atkinson quickly drove the van into a nearby parking lot on Union Street and got Ricky out in the nick of time. Ricky, 37, has cerebral palsy and is confined to a wheelchair.

"It went up fast," said Atkinson. "Flames were shooting out the front. If I had driven even a little bit further I don't think I would have got Ricky out in time."

He put a shaken Ricky down under a nearby tree. Some passersby helped carry Ricky to Lonicera Hall and called his parents who were in town on errands.

"We saw the smoke," recalled Rita, sitting at her kitchen table with her husband and son. "We were up at the mall. We thought it was a house on fire. We heard the sirens. Then Stacey called. He said 'we're OK, but the van is on fire.' My heart was in my throat."

"I think I could have run faster down there instead of driving."

"We hit every red light," said Dorien with a chuckle.

"Everyone was in our way. I just wanted to shout move!" added Rita.

Dorien said the cause of the fire has since been traced to a transmission fluid leak.

The Hachey's took possession of their full-sized Chevy van, about a week ago, bought on Kijiji from a man in the Miramichi who took \$2,200 off the listed price when he heard why they needed it. Shopping further on Kijiji they located a wheelchair lift which Dorien has installed on the van.

"This would have taken months; instead it took days," said an astonished Rita.

The Hachey's were able to replace their customized van and chair lift thanks to their insurance money and donations from friends and strangers alike, plus the proceeds of a benefit supper held at



Ricky Hachey of Waweig is all smiles as he tries out the lift installed on this customized van which replaces one lost in a freak fire May 26 while Hachey and his caregiver were travelling in St. Stephen. With him are his parents, Rita and Dorien Hachey.

their church, Holy Rosary, in St. Stephen.

The new wheelchair had already been on order because "Ricky wore out the old one," Rita explained with a laugh.

Rita said she and her husband wanted to thank everyone who helped that dreadful day, including the firefighters, the paramedics and people who were there to offer support.

"Thanks to the people who saw the van on fire and warned Stacey," she said. "They were in the right place at the right time."

In a voice breaking with emotion, Rita continued with her thanks.

"Last but not least, Stacey, thank you so much for saving our Ricky. No words can express how grateful we are."

Rita's sister, Veleda Bartlett, thinks Atkinson deserves a medal.

Rita said the night of the fire Ricky was in bed and she went in to check on him.

She said he put his palms together in prayer and asked "God was with me and Stacey wasn't He?"

"I told him He sure was," said Rita.

"It could have been such a disaster. It could have been on the highway where nobody would have seen them."

Tourism group opposes LNG

BY BARB RAYNER
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ST. ANDREWS – Charlotte County Region Tourist Association says the proposed Calais LNG project will have a serious and long-lasting negative impact on the tourism and cultural resources in the region.

The organization has voiced its concerns in a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) pointing out that more than 250,000 people visit this region annually to learn about and enjoy Passamaquoddy Bay, its history, natural environment, rich marine resources, people and culture.

Garrett Turta, chair of the association's board of directors and general manager of the Fairmont Algonquin, says the impacts of tourism just across the international border on the Canadian side are significant – in monetary terms, more than triple the impact of that on the U.S. side.

"Our industry alone directly employs over 1,300 people and brings over \$25,000,000 into this region. These tourism dollars have a significant and positive ripple effect on the overall economic health and stability of the entire region."

He said they believe the impact on their tourism industry, which relies heavily on their cultural and natural resources, and which has sustained this area for over 100 years, would be serious and long lasting.

"Our culture, our history and our natural surroundings have provided the foundation for a strong and sustainable tourism industry creating hundreds of jobs which would be put at risk should this project proceed."

Industrialization, he said, goes a long way to discourage visitors to come to an area and the intrusion of large tankers would have a profound effect on the aesthetic character of this area and on the unique experience of visitors.

In addition, said Turta, the security area around these tankers while they are

under way will impact all tourist boating activities and private recreational boating in the entire region including Grand Manan and beyond.

"It benefits no one to industrialize an area of outstanding cultural and natural importance. Places of great cultural value and natural beauty deserve to be protected. It is also of no benefit to threaten hundreds of existing, permanent tourism jobs in exchange for a very limited number of industrial jobs."

Accidents, said Turta, will happen as has been witnessed by the BP oil well disaster unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico. Any accident associated with LNG could be catastrophic in scale, he says, and devastating to the cultural and natural resources on which the county's tourism industry success depends.

He notes that the Canadian government has consistently said it will not allow LNG tankers through Head Harbour Passage and has refused to cooperate with the permitting process.

The CRTA was formed in 2006 to speak as one voice in the promotion of tourism in this region.



Turta



A major portion of the Blue Moon Motel in St. Andrews was destroyed by fire in the early morning hours of Saturday morning. Here, the metal roof lays curled in the parking lot Saturday.

Blaze a blow to St. Andrews: mayor

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
Neighbours experienced a few anxious hours as the building continued to burn.

Mayor John Craig and his wife, Debbie, live across the street from the property; and were awoken a little after 4 a.m. as their daughter Christine – a firefighter – rushed from the house.

"I heard the pager, and it said the exact number on Mowatt Drive but it just didn't register," said John.

Once downstairs the couple could clearly see the spectacle playing out across the street.

"We could hear it snapping and

cracking and the whole thing lit up over there."

Craig commented on the loss of an establishment such as the Blue Moon would mean for the town.

"We are expecting a very busy summer and we need as many accommodations as we can get. It is very unfortunate, not only for Gordon and Kim who own the business but for the town and county too."

The property was scheduled to open for the season on June 7.

The owners could not be reached for comment.

At this point, the fire is still under investigation.

St. Andrews couple wants RCMP to test Atlantide participants for noise violations

BY BARB RAYNER
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ST. ANDREWS – Some residents are concerned about just how noisy it might get when hundreds, if not thousands, of motorcycles descend on the town later this month for Atlantide.

Larry Lack and his wife, Lee Anne Ward, attended Monday night's town council meeting to voice their concerns and Lack said they were speaking on behalf of a lot of people who he described as the "silent majority."

He said they were still deciding whether to call their efforts the Atlantide Blockade or the Atlantide Muffler Crusade but their goal is to make sure that when a possible 5,000 motorcycles come to town at the end of the month every one of them complies with the law.

"We understand that a lot of people who have motorcycles have great interest in making them as loud as possible and even four or five can really disrupt the peace and quiet which is treasured in our town."

In fact, said Lack, an estimated 14 per cent of motor cycle owners in Canada have purchased special machines to make their motorcycles louder.

He said there is a device which is now available, and has been used in Fredericton, which can test the decibel level of a motorcycle to determine whether it exceeds the provincial guidelines.

"We don't know how to get it but we hope the town and the RCMP will cooperate in making sure that motor cycles coming into town are channelled through where each one passes the standard."

Lack said he really hoped the town would be able to assist them in making sure that the motorcyclists comply with the muffler law in the same way that other vehicle



John Gardner/Courier file

A St. Andrews couple want RCMP to test noise levels emitted by Atlantide participants.

owners in the town do.

He said the town was basing something that is supposed to boost the economy on the use of fossil fuels but perhaps they should start looking at the technology of the past such as trains or consider some type of economic development other than tourism.

"It is great to have economic development but not if it is something that contributes to the global warming which threatens the lives of us all and our grandchildren."

Coun. Mike Craig pointed out that pretty well all the tourists who visit St. Andrews come to the town by using fossil fuel.

Atlantide, which has been held in Moncton for the past three years, will take place between June 30 and July 4 and chairman Dale Hicks has estimated that if the weather cooperates there could be as many as 5,000 participants in the region over that weekend.