

City could speed up construction of services on McLeod Hill Road

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Mayor Brad Woodside says the city can speed up construction of water and sewer lines on McLeod Hill Road to co-ordinate with a \$15-million provincial plan to extend services to Chateau Heights.

"If the province is prepared to make that kind of investment, then I think it would probably change our plans somewhat," he said.

"This is a long-haul project for us.

"We'd be prepared to look at that to make that happen quicker."

At a public meeting last week, the provincial Department of Environment and Local Government unveiled a proposal to spend \$15 million to bring water and sewer services to Chateau Heights, a subdivision in an unincorporated area northwest of the capital that has had water problems for decades.

One government official said if the plan goes ahead — which requires a plebiscite by the people of Chateau Heights and a vote by city council — then Fredericton might have to speed up construction on McLeod Hill Road within city limits.

The city has been extending water and sewer lines up McLeod Hill Road to reach unserved areas. But the work is taking years because there is a lot of rock in the area and the city isn't borrowing money to complete the project.

Woodside said the proposed deal with the province over Chateau Heights means the city won't incur any additional expenses and the subdivision would be annexed into the city.

"We don't mind helping our neighbours out, but we're certainly not going outside the city with city services," he said.

The mayor said it is important that the residents in the 150 homes in Chateau Heights vote to join the city voluntarily. He said those residents will make a decision now that they have all the facts.

Woodside also said the residents have to understand the deal doesn't include the city upgrading their streets with sidewalks and curbs.

"Water is probably the most important element on the face of the Earth," he said.

"When you haven't got it, that is a pretty serious thing.

"If they decide to go, I will certainly be suggesting that we move a little quicker on what our plans were to get up there because it's very costly."

Trent Brewer, manager of the city's water and sewer division, said Friday the city is building about 200 metres a year of new water and sewer lines up McLeod Hill Road. But the distances also depend on the soil conditions, he said.

"This year is Phase 3 of what we call our co-funded extensions," he said. "We spend around \$300,000 a year.

"There's rock there so it makes it a little harder and as you get up over the hill we're are going to need booster stations and booster stations are not cheap."

Brewer said the work is co-funded by area residents who pay a fee when the water and sewer lines reaches their property.

So far in three years the city has built 420 metres of new pipes and it has 2,800 metres to go to hit the city limit at the top of the hill, he said.

"It is a multi-multi-year project," said Brewer.

The Chateau Heights project might, however, reduce the city's overall costs, he said.

The plan is for the water for Chateau Heights to come cross country from a city reservoir near Kilarney Lake which is at a higher elevation than the bottom of McLeod Hill Road.

Those new pipes would connect to the city services on McLeod Hill road about half way up the hill and reduce the number of booster stations needed, said Brewer.

Woodside also said he was not surprised to hear it will cost \$15 million to provide water and sewer services to Chateau Heights, which works out to \$100,000 per home.

"I'm dealing across the country with water and sewerage problems and waste water management systems and things like that and the costs are unbelievable," said the mayor, who is vice-president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

"That's why if you have it (water) you should really protect it.

"Without it you don't have anything. There are a lot of places in the world that haven't got it."