

City sewer project still going nowhere

by Mark McEachern

BRANTFORD - For the second time since it began back in 1994, a sewer pipeline project beneath the Grand River just outside of Brantford has been stalled once again.

An American drilling company left town last Friday after attempts to enlarge a pilot hole into bedrock beneath the river was unsuccessful. Brantford city engineer Alf Gretzinger told city council at a meeting last Monday night that the American

contractor has ceased their operations to explore other technical options in order to complete the drilling project.

The sewer line project has been painted with controversy since it started over four years ago.

Land claim issues have always been at the forefront of discussions between Brantford city council, the Six Nations elected council and the

Confederacy council in regards to this project. There have also been environmental issues raised concerning the drilling, in addition to the cost of the project -- reported by a Brantford newspaper to be 35 percent over the \$3 million budget due to previous drilling problems.

Some of the recent developments include:

- Feb of '97, when Brantford city council formed a Land Claims

'This project continues to be a waste of time and I'm very happy they've stopped drilling'

Onondaga Chief Arnie General

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Negotiation Committee that they presented to Six Nations Elected Council in order to sign such deals as a Landfill Site Agreement and a River Crossing Agreement with the city of Brantford.

- during this same month, Onondaga Confederacy Chief Arnie General told the Teka "it clearly bothers us that they haven't come to us. It is clearly indicated for all of us to see that this is Indian land that they are crossing, and they're doing it without the permission of the landholder. The band council is fine for administrative procedures, but not to the extent that they're giving away our land base. A decision like that, if it's to be made, should be made by the Confederacy."

General was deeply concerned with the environmental issues in relation to this project as well.

- Brantford Mayor Chris Friel was upset at the remarks made by General at the time and replied to the Teka: "We're going across the river this year. We aren't giving away anything but we have bent over backwards to meet all the environmental concerns. We've talked to that group repeatedly. I'll say it point blank: Chief Arnie General slams me in the *Expositor* for not coming down to talk. I phoned him probably twelve times in the last ten days and received one half-hearted

message back and nothing else. So who the hell am I supposed to be talking to in the Confederacy? Somebody tell me."

- According to Six Nations land researcher Phil Monture in March of '97, the land where Brantford plans to make the disputed pipeline crossing was surrendered to the Crown in 1835 by a group of twenty-six "Chiefs and Principal men of the Six Nations Indians" as part of surrender number 40.

Details of that record of information show that the title to a 48,000 acre parcel of land was given up so that the land could be sold for the use and benefit of Six Nations.

- In November of '97 Kast contractors experienced difficulties in completing the first phase of the project when they hit rock they were unable to penetrate some 60 feet below the ground level.

- In December of '97, Brantford city engineer Alf Gretzinger advised city council that the watermain installation beneath the Grand would continue at an increase of between 25-35% over the original estimate.

In a one page letter written to Brantford Mayor Chris Friel and members of council by Gretzinger last Monday night and the city's engineer said that there is no word on when the drilling will continue.

"We are having on going discussions with the contractors to consider all options and will advise Council of any further progress by the contractor in this regard", said Gretzinger.

Confederacy chief Arnie General was pleased with the news that the American drilling company had left the banks of the Grand temporarily.

"I feel it is quite appropriate that this has happened", said General. "We went down there, we burned the tobacco and we knew that this was trouble right from the start."

"I am for the purity of land, air and water and there are no guarantees that a project like this will not cause contamination to our ecosystem. We have to protect our wildlife, we have to protect ourselves in terms of our own preservation", he added.

Some of the options discussed at last Monday's city council meeting was a suspended pipeline above the water attached to a newly constructed bridge crossing the river.

"They have spent more than \$3 million dollars so far on this project and if they are going to build this bridge it will probably cost that much more to complete", said General. "This project continues to be a waste of time and I'm very happy that they have stopped drilling."