

Utility CEO Pleased with New Home

Bruce Bartlett, Telegraph-Journal

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SAINT JOHN - Saint John Energy staff began moving into their new, \$10-million headquarters this week, but it will take a while to bring everything together, says Eric Marr, president and CEO of the utility.

"We are over here, but there are still a lot of things to do," he said Tuesday.

Contractors are still working on the west side site at 325 Simms St., just off Bleury Street, but all the administrative staff is

now in the building.

"Our stores and materials are still at Charlotte Street, so we are working out of two locations," Marr said.

Part of the reason the utility decided to put up a new building was that the location in the south end is not big enough to hold all the needed materials. Some of the larger parts such as poles, transformers and big reels of wire are spread around at four satellite locations.

The utility looked into expanding the Charlotte Street location, but a consultant advised money spent there would not be recovered if it had to be sold. On top of that, running a semi-industrial business using big trucks wasn't a good fit with the neighbourhood, which is residential, Marr said.

The new building, at 78,000 square feet, is about 50 per cent bigger than the site on Charlotte Street.

"The big change is in the garage and storage area. The office space isn't much larger than what we had before," the Saint John Energy CEO said.

The utility has seven acres of property located very close to Highway 1 in the new location.

As soon as the work on the garage and storage areas are completed the satellite storage areas will be closed down, he said.

Saint John Energy had contracted a price for the new space at \$10 million, but the completed cost with extras will be around \$10.5 million, Marr said.

"We are very pleased overall. The only negative has been the timing."

A shortage of certain tradespeople pushed the completion date back, said Marr.

Originally, the utility had a completion date in February, but no one was pushing hard for it because there was no great desire to move in the winter. They were hoping to be in by April.

"Overall we are happy with the product we have, it's just the timing was a little longer than anticipated," Marr said.

The old building has been sold to Key Industries, but the closing date is flexible, which has worked well for the utility, he said.