

■ ICE JAM

Amphibex expected here today

Work set to begin on breaking up Nechako River ice jam

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Free Press

One of the city's plans to break up the ice jam on the Nechako River will swing into action this weekend.

New Brunswick-based Eco Technologies is expected to arrive late today with its Amphibex machine, city public information officer Don Schaffer said.

The Amphibex, built by Quebec-based Normrock Industries, resembles a conventional excavator built on a boat body. The 22-tonne machine can sail at up to eight knots and walk across land using its bucket arm and stabilizers.

"Putting up berms and dikes is a defensive approach. In a spring freshet [flood] that's all you can do," city chief engineer Dave Dyer said. "The conditions have given us an opportunity to go on the offensive."

Dyer said warm weather earlier this week created open water on the Fraser River.

"We haven't had that in the past - that's the key part. I met with the fellow yesterday and he advised us that he needs to work in water," Dyer said Tuesday. "How quickly he can work we don't know. There is so much ice out there he'll have to find his way around. I think the big factor will be the weather."

Warm weather had caused the ice jam to soften. However, a return of cold weather could solidify the ice jam and make it more difficult to break up.

Eco Technologies has done a fair amount of work in Quebec and Eastern Canada, breaking up ice jams in similar situations, Dyer said.

"The river he was just on was twice the flow of the Nechako right now."

The second plan, to pump 15 C water from the Intercontinental Pulp Mill into the river, is proceeding, Dyer added.

Contractors are working with the city and Canfor Pulp Limited Partnership on how to make the 2.7 km pipeline work at both ends, he said.

"We'll be looking to get it as close to the confluence as possible. We'll get the melting going on in the confluence



The Amphibex at work.

where we've really observed it plugging up," he said. "It will be on top of the ice to start with, but the pipe will soon melt through creating a plume."

Groundwater several degrees warmer than the water in the Nechako has already started being pumped from the

centre of the Cameron Street Bridge.

"It's amazing how much [difference] that few-degree temperature differential makes."

City utilities manger Marco Fornari said concerns raised about Prince George's water supply are unfounded.

Although several wells along the river are pumping water into the river, instead of into the city's drinking water system the demand is still less than during the summer, he said.

Pumping station 605 near Wilson Park is still safely above the ice and filling much of the demand created by taking the other stations off line, Fornari said.

"In the summer he can pump 18 hours at this station. Right now we're at about 10 [hours]," Fornari explained. "Our drinking water supply is protected."

Even during the peak flooding in the area, station 605 wasn't effected by the flood.

"[And] we have Fishtrap [Island pumping station], which is high and dry."

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