



## Sour gas driller says he wouldn't live on site Neighbour claims it proves wells not safe

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Compton Petroleum Corp.'s president says he has no problem visiting wells that produce deadly sour gas, but he stopped short of saying he would live next to rigs while they are drilling six new wells on the southeast edge of the city.

A neighbour to Compton's proposed new wells said that raises questions whether they can be developed safely.

"It's like he's saying if he was in our boots, he wouldn't want to live with sour gas wells nearby, so why should we?" said Florence White, whose family lives on a farm about one kilometre from Compton's wellsite, which is one kilometre from city limits.

"Coming and visiting isn't the same as living here. He basically said he's too important to live down here," White said Wednesday.

During the second day of an Alberta Energy and Utilities Board hearing into Compton's application to add more wells to the existing sour gas wells it has operated for about 20 years, the chairman of the three-member EUB panel asked company president and chief executive officer Ernie Sapieha if he has considered the consequences if something goes wrong while the wells are drilled.

Chairman Arden Berg then asked Sapieha if he would be willing to live near the wells.

"How would you feel if the board were to approve these wells and people who live in that area said: 'If you really believe these wells are as safe to drill as you are promoting, move an ATCO trailer out here and during the critical phase, you live out there at the same distance as the nearest resident,'" Berg said.

"Would you be willing to do that?"

Sapieha, who lives in the upscale inner-city Mount Royal neighbourhood, said he had difficulty answering a hypothetical question and noted it would be "impractical" for him to be required to reside at the site while the wells are drilled.

"The reason I live in Mount Royal is because I work a lot of hours and I can get back and forth to our office downtown in a few minutes," Sapieha said.

"As the president of a public company, I have responsibilities to our shareholders and employees to run the company in the best possible manner. I can't do that and be out there at the same time."

Sapieha said he feels the company's plan will ensure residents' safety and added that he often visits sour gas well sites.

"It's not a fair question," he said.

"I'm not worried about being on the site, when it comes to our safety procedures."

Compton wants to add more wells to deplete rich gas reserves within 15 years instead of more than 50 years it will likely take its two existing wells.

"Our independent analysts have estimated there is 68 billion cubic feet of gas in the pool for these wells," Derek Longfield, Compton's vice-president of special projects, told the hearing Wednesday.

The company has also applied to reduce the emergency planning zone for drilling the new wells from a 15-kilometre radius to four kilometres.

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