

St. John's company touts natural gas

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More than 30 years after natural gas was discovered off the coast of Labrador, an engineer from Newfoundland is hoping to use a system he's patented to get the gas to market.

The fields haven't been developed because of the high costs, harsh climate and heavy ice. Steven Campbell of Trans Ocean Gas Ltd. was a boy growing up in St. John's when the first gas was found in 1971.

He's patented a process for compressing gas in fibreglass reinforced plastic cylinders that would be stored in steel containers. The gas would be moved to market by container ships rather than traditional pipelines.



Steven Campbell

"We took this technology and applied it to a ship-based method whereby we can now safely, reliably, and cost-effectively transport large quantities of compressed natural gas in these fibre-reinforced plastic cylinders," Campbell says. He's been making his pitch in St. John's this week at an offshore petroleum conference.



Jan Wagner of Fluor Canada, a Calgary-based petroleum engineering and construction company, says Labrador gas production faces challenges from being so far north, away from markets and in iceberg territory.

Drilling for gas
in the 1970s

Stiff competition for production

Labrador also faces competition from more accessible natural gas off Nova Scotia and maybe Newfoundland's south coast.

Campbell hopes to make Newfoundland a base when the orders start coming in.

"What we're looking at is setting up manufacturing facilities in Newfoundland – install our system in ships – and have them ready for service," he says.

Campbell's proposal isn't the only one that's been put forward for extracting offshore natural gas. In February, EnerSea of Houston presented its compressed gas technology at Memorial University.