

Halton's Health Officer weighs in on St Marys

BY DON REDMOND

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Dr Bob Nosal, Halton's Medical Officer of Health, has expressed grave concerns over the St Mary's quarry application to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The proposed quarry, which falls on the Campbellville-Flamborough border, could have adverse effects of the Halton residents' water supply, warned Nosal in a letter to Diane Schwier, an aggregate specialist in the MNR's Guelph office.

"The Health Department has concerns regarding the potential risk for adverse impacts upon groundwater quantity and quality that could be caused by the quarry," Nosal said.

He expressed serious concerns that St Marys had failed to complete their four-part groundwater recirculation tests. The company conducted just one test, which most deemed unusable due to heavy rainfall during the testing period last July. At that time, St Marys said they were going to continue with three more tests but have since balked, submitting their application directly ahead to the MNR.

However, Ministry of the Environment officials in Hamilton are demanding that St Marys continue the tests and are threatening to pull their Permit To Take Water by March 20, should the company not do so.

In his letter, Nosal is asking the MNR to consult with the MOE before even considering the quarry's application.

"Given the proposed size of the quarry and possible related risks to groundwater quality and quantity, it would be preferable from a public health perspective that significantly more work be done to ascertain the groundwater risk and feasibility of the Adaptive Management Plan before the application is considered complete," said Nosal.

He further asked the MNR to "determine if additional information is required to be submitted with the application and specifically whether other information on water impacts or any Ministry of the Environment approval, testing or decision on the impact of the quarry on water quality or supply is required."

Aside from a discussion of the St. Marys quarry application last summer, Halton has been standing back on the issue thus far, watching as a 'commenting agency' since the application is technically within the Flamborough border.

However, Nosal's stronger stand on the issue has at least one Milton councillor applauding.

"I'm glad the Region is standing up on this issue," said Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray, "because it certainly has an impact on our residents in Campbellville."

"The notion that St. Marys could go ahead without doing the proper water testing scares me to death," she continued.

She believes the MOE should forcibly intervene until it has all the data it needs.

"The MOE is supposed to protect the public and protect people's water supply," she said. "They should be front and centre on this right now."

"I hope that this isn't an instance of one ministry (the MNR) being able to completely bypass another (the MOE)," she noted.