

Quarry meetings this month
FORCE, St. Marys hold information sessions
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With St. Marys Cement triggering the 45-day consultation and notification period of its aggregate licence application today (April 3), opponents to the Flamborough Quarry are taking additional steps to strengthen their position on the proposal.

Even as their lawyers and technical experts are reviewing the large amount of documentation submitted by the aggregate company in support of their application, members of FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) are mounting a vigorous campaign to voice objections to the proposed 66.4-hectare quarry on 11th Concession Road East near Milborough Line. Last week, the citizens' advocacy group unveiled a four-member "blue ribbon" strategic advisory group to provide advice and guidance to the FORCE steering committee in the areas of public health, as well as the protection of natural spaces, source water and the environment.

FORCE chair Graham Flint also announced a community meeting being hosted by the group at 7 p. m. Wednesday, April 15 at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary School in Carlisle. A large turnout is expected at the meeting that will feature a summary of the application's details and an explanation of the aggregate licence process.

Residents will be encouraged to submit their objections or a template objection provided by FORCE to St. Marys Cement and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) before the May 21 deadline.

"These objection letters are critically important," Flint said. "We are now at the stage where the battle goes to another level."

Commenting on the recently formed advisory group, FORCE vice-chair Mark Rudolph explained, "This just becomes an extra set of eyes and ears for us." Further oversight from "seasoned individuals" will complement the scientific analysis of the group's retained technical experts, he added.

Members of the group, all of whom have volunteered their expertise, are: Dr. Alba DiCenso, professor of clinical epidemiology and biostatistics at McMaster University; Jacques Guerin, former federal deputy minister of environment and chair of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks; Monte Hummel, president emeritus of the World Wildlife Fund Canada and Dr. Gail Krantzberg, professor and director of the Dofasco Centre for Engineering and Public Policy at McMaster University.

As a requirement of the aggregate licence process, St. Marys Cement will host an information session from 4 to 9 p. m., Monday, April 27 at the Waterdown Legion Hall. FORCE is urging area residents to attend the meeting in large numbers. The aggregate company must seek to resolve any objections that are filed by residents. If they are unable to do so, the matter will be referred to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Three weeks ago, John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of St. Marys, sent a letter to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), advising that the company didn't want the ministry to revoke its Permit to Take Water (PTTW) as of March 20. So far, the ministry has delayed action while it reviews a hydrogeological assessment included in the licence application.

St. Marys spokesperson Melanie Horton said Tuesday that once MOE officials have a chance to review the assessment, they will determine if there are any "information gaps" in the material. The MOE will also deal with the issue of how to proceed with additional pump tests at the site, she said.

The ministry ruled that pump tests conducted at the site of the proposed quarry last summer needed to be redone as heavy precipitation during the test period skewed results. But St. Marys refused to repeat the tests, arguing that the data is relevant and another round of testing wouldn't provide any new material. The MOE then responded that the PTTW, issued for three rounds of testing and expiring at the end of June this year, would be revoked on March 20.

Moroz has asked to meet with ministry representatives when they complete their review. Continuation of the testing under the permit will be discussed at that time.

Flint and Rudolph expect the MOE to be consistent with their decisions about the need for the tests and the way they should be conducted. "As a community, we won't accept anything less than what has been regulated, based on extensive public consultation," Rudolph said.