

Halton MPP echoes councillor's concerns over EBR process

BY DON REDMOND

Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy has yet another high-profile supporter in Halton when it comes to her battle of straightening out the Environmental Bill of Rights parameters. While McCarthy has heard a cacophony of supportive voices from Halton against the St. Marys' quarry application on the Campbellville-Flamborough border, her latest entree was asking Premier Dalton McGuinty to examine the EBR a little more carefully as she believes the aggregate industry at large - and the Ministry of Natural Resources in specific - are a little less than forthcoming on the EBR review website.

To that end, Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh joined her in battle, telling McGuinty in a letter that "I concur with Ms. McCarthy that the Provincial government needs to revamp the application process to more fully consider opposing viewpoints, especially when those views are overwhelming negative and the government must ensure the transparency of the evaluation history of licence applications posted on the EBR."

Chudleigh pointed to the reality that "virtually all commenting bodies, including the Ministry of the Environment, have advised the Ministry of Natural Resources that they object to the licence being granted to this application."

From her end, McCarthy was delighted with Chudleigh's support.

"I know that Ted had spoken out against the application back some time ago and it's great to see he's still got issues with it," she noted, referring to a Spring 2006 story in the Halton Compass where the MPP noted the previous applicant, David Lowndes, was "hambing (the application) like it was a football."

But when it comes to a full-scale review of the EBR - and how she believes it may weigh more in favour of the MNR over the MOE - McCarthy said she needed help at the Provincial level, such as Chudleigh's.

She applauded the McGuinty government for creating the EBR, noting "I think they've done an admirable job of putting potential safeguards in there to protect the environment" but added quickly, "I say 'potential' for a reason."

"When (the EBR) works, it's wonderful," she noted. "But when it doesn't, it's like putting a tuxedo on a goat. You can dress it up as this wonderful thing. But it's still a goat."

She questioned whether the EBR had the power that its name would suggest.

"Sometimes when you're fighting a battle like this, you realize that perhaps there's a face on it (the EBR) that suggests it's balanced."

McCarthy suggested that it hasn't been, weighing more heavily towards the needs of the MNR, rather than the MOE.

"It has to work equally for both the MNR and the MOE," she said. "I'm not seeing that."

With over 750 letters of objection to the St. Marys' application, she noted that those numbers are not reflected on the EBR site, nor were major concerns addressed.