

Compass-2/5/09

Opponents ask: will MNR consider St Marys' application complete?

BY DON REDMOND

After St Marys bypassed further water tests for its quarry application at 11th Concession Road east and Milborough Town Line, opponents are wondering if the Ministry of Natural Resources will even consider the application to be complete.

The quarry applicants surprised both Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy and antiquary group, FORCE, when they submitted their application directly to the MNR on January 22 without further testing of their groundwater recirculation equipment - testing the opponents say is a necessity.

St Marys held one contentious round of testing last summer that opponents considered invalid due to excessive rain during the test period.

McCarthy noted that the MNR has 20 days to review the application and determine whether or not additional information is needed.

However, she added that St Marys has up to two years to respond to MNR concerns before the application is considered withdrawn.

Graham Flint, the chair of FORCE, took the matter directly to Donna Cansfield, the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources, asking her to advise the community as to "the actual process, timeline and procedures that your ministry will be using under the Aggregate Resources Act to review this application and make this assessment (as to whether or not the application is complete)."

Flint told Cansfield that when the MOE advised St Marys on October 30, 2008 "that the results of its Phase One pumping test conducted during the summer of 2008, were not acceptable", the ministry also advised the company that it would have to redo the Phase One testing.

"The ministry (MOE) felt that the data was not sufficiently reliable to help characterize the aquifer or to provide a baseline against which the effects of testing a proposed mitigation system could be compared."

To that end, Flint told Cansfield that FORCE was hoping the "review by the (MNR) be comprehensive and not merely an 'inventory checklist' to ensure the presence of required documents."

In a release, Flint further added that without proper groundwater recirculation tests in place, he believes that neither Hamilton nor Halton will be able to issue St Marys the official plan amendments needed to proceed.

"Accurate hydrogeology work is critically important to us," he said. "In our area, groundwater is the only source of potable water."

On the Halton end, Milton Councillor Jan Mowbray recently approached local Conservatives MPPs looking for support against the quarry application.

In a letter to Burlington MPP Joyce Savoline and Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh, Mowbray said their voices were needed at Queen's Park.

"For several years now residents of Flamborough and Campbellville have been opposing the application by St Mary's Cement for a quarry in Flamborough right on the Milton border," said Mowbray in her correspondence.

"The potential impacts are well established, not the least of which is a well-known two-year recharge rate for the underground water flow. Notwithstanding the provincial government's Source Water Protection Act designed to protect drinking water sources, the application has met no resistance from the provincial Liberals. Despite the Liberal's Greenbelt Protection Act that said no new aggregate development is to be permitted in key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features, the application continues to hang over the heads of Campbellville and Flamborough residents."

Mowbray added that while NDP party leader hopeful Andrea Horwath spoke to the issue late last year, she was hoping the Conservatives would turn up the heat, as well.

“When I attended the Queen’s Park session at which Andrea Horwath spoke in the fall of last year, there was no comment from any of the other parties - other than the inane rhetoric from the Liberals. We need your voices to be heard. We all need to come together to raise alarm bells about the threat to the underground water system in this highly vulnerable area.”