

Councillor slams St Marys' pitch as 'bribery'

BY DON REDMOND

When St Marys made a special appeal to Hamilton City Council on April 15, the day of a council vote on them, Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy slammed them, calling their tactics "little better than thinly-veiled bribery."

St Marys vice president John Moroz had sent councillors an email, saying that "in a time of economic uncertainty, St Marys is continuing its substantial investment in a development that will bring jobs, economic benefits and opportunity to the City of Hamilton."

He went on to say the proposed quarry would bring "110 permanent full-time jobs, with the majority of jobs expected to be filled by local residents, \$80,000 per year in taxation revenue, \$135,000 annual revenue through the aggregate licence fee (\$4 million over the life of the quarry) and \$3 million per year spent locally on operating supplies and services."

That had McCarthy fuming, saying using a weak economy as a rationale to approve their application "was something they obviously thought might be advantageous."

McCarthy's motion that the quarry be turned down was based on what she called "incomplete water tests" as well as grave concerns given by both Hamilton and Halton's Chief Medical Officers.

However, she cited nearly two dozen more concerns within her motion.

It wasn't enough for the aggregate giant as Hamilton voted unanimously against the proposal. This is now the fourth or fifth vote that St Marys has seen denied unanimously by Hamilton Council since the process began in May 2004.

"There have been more unanimous votes against that quarry proposal than any other single issue that's come before it or since," said McCarthy. McCarthy asked Hamilton Senior Planner Michelle Sergi to double-check St. Mary's figures.

Sergi confirmed that, "Based on their annual tonnage, they are required to pay a fee of 11.5 cents per metric tonne. Out of this, 11.5 cents per tonne, 7.5 cents goes to the municipality, and is normally used by the municipality for road improvements/repairs. The remaining four cents goes to the Ontario Aggregate Resources Trust. St. Marys is proposing to extract a maximum of three million tonnes per year. However, this amount is depended upon market and St. Mary's has estimated that they will be removing 1.8 million tonnes per year. Therefore, the amount paid to the City annually could range between \$135,000 to \$225,000."

However, she was quick to add that "Halton has indicated that they would (also) be looking for monetary compensation from St. Mary's and/or the City if the haul route is through Halton to provide them with annual funds to address road maintenance and improvements over the life of the quarry."

In actual fact, Milton Councillor Jan Mowbray will be taking McCarthy's motion - word-for-word, tailoring the end to suit Halton, Burlington and Milton - and asking Milton Council to

endorse it on April 27.

McCarthy said the continued refusal of the quarry application will “now be used as a benchmark for every environmental concern that comes before Hamilton Council from this point on.