

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2008

MCGUINTY GOVT POISED TO BYPASS CLEAN WATER PROCESS

Ministry of Environment Posts Draft St Marys Permit During Drinking Water Week

The McGuinty government today posted a draft Permit to Take Water (PTTW) on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry for consultation for 30 days. The PTTW, when finalized, would allow testing of an unproven and theoretical groundwater recirculation system (GRS) by St Marys CBM to attempt to mitigate the impacts of the proposed Flamborough quarry. The test would proceed before real progress on local source water protection planning. The posting takes place during Drinking Water Week*, observed across North America. It is also the 8th anniversary this month of the Walkerton tragedy which led to the McGuinty government's much touted *Clean Water Act* and source protection planning.

"How ironic that the very government that cites its drinking water protection initiatives after Walkerton as a major achievement would allow this test on this invasive development to proceed before our local Source Protection Committee even gets a chance to do its real work," said Graham Flint, Chair and Spokesperson of Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE).

The role of the Halton/Hamilton Source Protection Committee is to complete a threats assessment report for this watershed and to prepare a source protection plan to remove or reduce those threats. The Committee is still working on its Terms of Reference. Its supporting agency, the Halton/Hamilton Source Protection Authority was recently granted another \$959,000 from the province to undertake technical analysis.

"This proposed quarry clearly represents a potential threat to the municipal drinking water system in Carlisle and to other rural residences, farms and businesses," said Rick Smith, Executive Director of Environmental Defence. "We thought the McGuinty government was serious about protecting drinking water at its source. Approving this permit would be putting the cart before the horse."

FORCE has consistently opposed the proposed aggregate development, on behalf of the community. It has argued that the test is premature since the application was filed in October 2006 and that source protection planning should happen first. Similarly, the City of Hamilton passed a unanimous motion in February 2008 calling on the McGuinty government to fully consider the ramifications of the proposed development. The motion also called for a formal review by the Halton/Hamilton Source Protection Authority, as part of the local source protection planning process, before any provincial permits or approvals are issued.

The proposed St Marys CBM Flamborough quarry sits within the Wellhead Protection Area and recharge area for the Carlisle municipal drinking water system – two areas promised extra protection under the new drinking water law. St Marys own consultants, Gartner Lee Limited, have documented in technical reports that the proposed quarry would have “unacceptable impacts” on area groundwater resources.

An Expert Technical Committee to the Minister of the Environment regarding source protection planning called quarries a land use activity of provincial concern in November 2004 and recommended no new quarries be permitted within a 5 year Time of Travel to a municipal wellhead protection area. The St Marys proposed quarry falls even closer, within the 2 year Time of Travel to the Carlisle municipal wells.

“To add insult to injury,” added Mr. Flint, “St Marys will be allowed to pump millions of litres of water out of our aquifer this summer while the residents of Carlisle can expect to endure yet another summer of water restrictions.”

Area residents had been assured by MOE and City officials as recently as an April 16th, 2008 public meeting that no testing would be permitted during the summer months.

St Marys CBM purchased 380 acres of land in 2006 from Lowndes Holdings Corp. to develop the massive below the water table quarry. The company owns an adjacent parcel of 154 acres with the stated intention of expansion. In addition to its drinking water implications, the lands fall completely within the Natural Heritage System of Ontario’s Greenbelt including Provincially Significant Wetlands, significant woodlands and species at risk. It is the first Greenfield quarry proposal under both the Greenbelt Plan and the *Clean Water Act*.

“Our community has identified water as a key reason for the proposed quarry’s rejection since this proposal was raised in May 2004,” noted Mr. Flint. “There is still time for the McGuinty government to take action to honour the intent of its source protection laws and planning process.”

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* For information about Drinking Water Week, please visit:
www.awwa.org/Government/Content.cfm?ItemNumber=3862&navItemNumber=3863