

Horwath eyes quarry  
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Residents opposed to St. Marys Cement's Flamborough quarry made their way to Queen's Park last week to support Hamilton Centre MPP Andrea Horwath as she challenged the Grits to protect the province's greenbelt.

During a question and answer period, the NDP representative told Environment Minister John Gerretsen that the possible development of an open pit mine on the 11th Concession East at Milborough Line would not only threaten the drinking water of thousands of Carlisle residents, but that the application is also in contradiction of provincially protected land as part of the Natural Heritage System of the Greenbelt.

Horwath's question to the Minister came just days after the Ministry of the Environment notified St. Marys Cement that the company's water-pumping tests, permitted following the issuance of a Permit To Take Water (PTTW), showed data results that were unacceptable. The ministry has since ordered St. Marys Cement to repeat the tests.

"If you are a student at school and you get an 'F' on a test, you fail," said Horwath. "If you're an aggregate company trying to develop a new quarry in the Greenbelt in a municipality's drinking water protection area, you can keep getting 'F's, get more chances to redo your tests, and still make your way through the development process."

That's the message Horwath hoped to bring home to Minister Gerretsen, but his response wasn't what she and approximately 40 other community residents were hoping to hear.

"He didn't answer the question," charged Ward 15 Councillor Margaret McCarthy. "He ignored the fact that the provincial government has talked an awful lot about safe water protection...he talked about it being not an approval for a quarry, that it was simply just a test."

However, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale MPP and Minister of Government and Consumer Services Ted McMeekin explained that, while local citizens have the right to voice their concerns about the limestone quarry and its potential ill effects on the environment and drinking water supply, St. Marys Cement also has rights.

"They (St. Marys) are going through the stages and our government and I are going to darn well make sure that they aren't getting any breaks in the process," said McMeekin. "We can't arbitrarily ignore those (the company's) rights."

McCarthy countered that following a lengthy period of time spent enacting protection policies, the McGuinty government currently has the tools it needs to shut down the quarry application. "How can you allow the St. Marys application to continue for four years and attempt to drag down a community by sheer fatigue?"

With the onus on St. Marys, McMeekin explained that in order for the company to obtain the go-ahead, it will have to follow steps that are "even more rigorous and difficult," as the site is located within the Greenbelt.

Flamborough's MPP stated that the proposed limestone pit is "the wrong quarry in the wrong place," and said he will continue to work closely with the City of Hamilton and anti-quarry group FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) to oppose the project "in ways that don't prejudice the case."