

McCarthy pitches delay on PTTW to premier

Melanie Cummings, Special to the Review

Published on Jun 13, 2008

As much as Margaret McCarthy wants the provincial government to hold off on giving permission that would allow St. Marys Cement to conduct water tests on a proposed quarry site in Carlisle, the city councillor wants to know how a file detailing a history of hazardous waste "never saw the light of day."

The Ward 15 councillor discovered a 100-page report that revealed several chemical and environmental infractions at the proposed St. Marys Cement quarry site that wasn't included in documentation given to the Combined Aggregate Review Team (CART), a group that garners opinions and expertise from stakeholder agencies and government.

In fact, the 700-page Records of Site Condition report given to the members of CART, which is reviewing the quarry company's Permit to Take Water (PTTW) application, "categorically denied the existence of any hazardous waste material," McCarthy said. "All commenting bodies need to re-evaluate the entire application with a view to honoring all the legislation that speak to protecting communities' source water," she added.

McCarthy is a vocal opponent to the quarry and she is concerned that, through the process of circulating water during the pumping test, contaminants in the ground will be disturbed and leak into nearby wells on which residents rely for their water supply.

In a letter sent last Friday, McCarthy asked Premier Dalton McGuinty to intervene on the PTTW application filed by St. Marys because "it will be issued without this critical site contamination file ever reaching the people who are responsible for commenting on this application."

Although the deadline for public input into the Permit To Take Water application was June 6, McCarthy is asking for a two-month extension so that the community can "better study the various infractions that took place in the past on this property."

She said she did a title search of the property's previous owners and discovered a Ministry of Environment report that revealed the site's history of hazardous waste including illegal dumping of septic tank contents pumped into the fields by a sewage company, asphalt shingles, abandoned cars, tires, a homemade incinerator for burning electrical and metal components and six 45-gallon PCB drums.

"I also note that your office's recent site inspection on April 24, 2008 confirmed that even the non-hazardous waste was not completely remediated," wrote McCarthy in her letter to the premier.

"How it was missed off of the MOE's data base I have no idea," said McCarthy in a telephone interview, Monday. "In a post-Walkerton era, the implications of such incompetence or willful intent are certainly challengeable," she added.

After a visit by the Ministry of Environment on April 24 the aggregate company was ordered to remove roof shingles, empty drums, plastic and metal, all deemed non-hazardous, from the 150-acre site. Subsequent groundwater samples taken by the ministry revealed this waste did not have an impact on the water supply, Jennifer Hall, regional communications advisor with the ministry, told the Review in a story published May 9.
