

Waste records call water-taking into question: councillor

Eric McGuinness  
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The Ontario Ministry of the Environment is confident that a water pumping test at the proposed St. Marys Cement quarry site can be done safely despite a recently revealed history of illegal waste dumping and burning on the former farm property.

But Councillor Margaret McCarthy, a staunch opponent of the quarry north of Carlisle, says the pumping permit approval process should start over in view of the new information. It shows that insulation was burned off copper cable in a homemade incinerator, septic tank contents were pumped into fields and asphalt shingles, cars, tires and solid PCB waste in drums were found by ministry inspectors.

Records the ministry sent to McCarthy last month show separate incidents of improper waste management by former owners or tenants in 1987-88, 1989-91 and 1996-98. Only after the third were tonnes of shingles, ash and contaminated soil excavated and trucked away.

The councillor says city officials who reviewed St. Marys' water-taking permit application were working from a file that "categorically denied the existence of any hazardous waste," and as a result "there should be nothing less than a whole new evaluation with all the files available to the community and the commenting agencies for investigation."

McCarthy wrote Premier Dalton McGuinty yesterday, asking him to instruct the ministry not to issue a water-taking permit for the pumping test.

Jennifer Hall, regional communications adviser for the ministry, wrote in an e-mail to The Spectator this week that no permit would be issued "if we have any reason to think that the Carlisle drinking water supply could be at risk."

She also wrote that: "Any potential impacts from historical waste contamination would have already been mobilized into groundwater from rain and snow melt. Put another way, if there was a problem, we would have seen it already ... Also, the pumping test will not be conducted in the area of concern identified by Councillor McCarthy."

emcguinness@thespec.com

905-526-4650

<http://www.thespec.com/article/382228>