

Opposition remains strong
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It has been almost five years since residents in northeast Flamborough learned that plans were afoot for a quarry on the north side of 11th Concession Road East near Milborough Line. But despite the passage of time, the groundswell of community protest remains as strong today as it did when news of the proposal first surfaced.

“The numbers matter,” said Graham Flint, chair of the anti-quarry group FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) as he commended area residents for continuing to stay engaged in a process that is lengthy and at times, for affected homeowners, very frustrating.

Speaking to a crowd of about 400 people at last Wednesday’s information meeting at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary School, Flint said well-attended meetings do make a difference and are “the reason we’re doing as well as we are on this (fighting the quarry).”

Stressing that the fight is “very winnable” because “no reasonable person would put a quarry there,” he encouraged residents to stay the course and continue to turn out in large numbers to voice their opposition to the 66.5-hectare (164-acre) quarry proposed by St. Marys Cement (SMC). The main reason for the meeting was to encourage residents to submit letters of objection to SMC and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) before the end of the public consultation period for the company’s aggregate licence application on May 21. A template objection letter was provided by FORCE for those who haven’t already sent in objections and is also available on the group’s website at www.stopthequarry.ca.

Residents were also encouraged to show their opposition by submitting their comments to the Environmental Registry before the May 21 deadline and by showing up in large numbers and making sure they are registered as having attended next Monday’s (April 27) public meeting hosted by SMC at the Waterdown Legion Hall, 79 Hamilton Street North. The meeting is scheduled to run from 4 to 9 p. m.

Flint stressed that the community’s involvement in all three actions is critical if residents want to effectively fight the quarry proposal. He also explained that the Registry is part of the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) and can be accessed online at www.ebr.gov.on.ca. The item number for the St. Marys quarry application is 010-6227. Comments submitted to the Registry are considered by the MNR as it makes its decision on whether or not to grant the aggregate licence.

As residents were being informed on how to do their part, Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy was securing Hamilton City Council’s unanimous support for her motion to have council go on record as objecting to the aggregate licence application while also requesting that the MNR refuse the application. A similar motion is being prepared for Milton Town Council’s consideration on April 26.

Just hours before Hamilton council convened, a letter from John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of St. Marys CBM arrived by e-mail. It outlined the economic benefits of the

project to the city, including 110 permanent full-time jobs, \$80,000 in annual taxation revenue, \$135,000 in annual revenue through the aggregate licence fee and \$3 million per year in locally purchased operating supplies and services.

“We look forward to working with the City of Hamilton to bring long-term jobs and economic investment to the area,” the letter concluded.

McCarthy responded, sending a message to councillors and charging, “The money the City of Hamilton would receive from that quarry couldn’t even pay for (fixing) a pothole, and, that financial information can easily be brought to council tonight. Obviously, this is St. Marys Cement’s less than veiled attempt to derail the motion before us tonight.”

After her motion received council’s blessing, she e-mailed media contacts, saying support was unanimous. “This, in spite of St. Marys attempts to dangle a dollar in their face to change their mind.”

Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale (ADFW) MPP Ted McMeekin was in the gallery at the council meeting “to monitor” how council dealt with “a couple of issues,” he explained during a subsequent interview with the Review. “The quarry was one of them,” he said, adding that he is pleased with council’s decision to support McCarthy’s motion and looks forward to the city making a decision on the rezoning and Official Plan Amendment application made for the quarry lands in September 2004.

“It was important that I be there,” he said of his presence at the council meeting. “This is an issue of some urgency.” McMeekin has long supported the work of FORCE and continues to hold concerns about the potential environmental consequences of the quarry.