

Protect, prevent

Margaret McCarthy, Council Notes

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Turning on the tap and having plentiful, safe drinking water is something that most of us take for granted.

Imagine, if you will, worrying about that basic need on a daily basis for years, with no known end in sight. It's a situation that seems ridiculous in this country, especially in light of the strict controls implemented following the Walkerton tragedies to protect groundwater sources.

Nonetheless, that is what it has been like for the Carlisle community and properties further north. Now that community is faced with the proposed St. Marys quarry application on the 11th Concession.

The Ministry of Environment now faces a decision about an application for a water-taking permit that holds my community's fate in their hands - at least for the short term. St. Marys has made an application to the MOE to allow testing of a mitigation system that has never been used in these circumstances.

What is the definition of mitigation? It means making unacceptable impacts less bad. Knowing that the Carlisle groundwater-based municipal water system has a well-documented history of both quantity and quality problems, combined with the knowledge that St. Marys' own consultants have written that there would be impacts from the quarry without mitigation, it boggles the mind that the testing could ever be allowed.

The City of Hamilton's public health department is on record as having serious concerns with this testing, along with the community and Hamilton City Council to boot. On February 27, council unanimously supported my motion calling on the provincial government to:

- bring to the attention of the of the provincial government its concerns regarding potential adverse impacts on the Carlisle groundwater-based municipal drinking water system;
- request the provincial government, through the Premier and the Ontario Minister of the Environment, to fully consider the potential ramifications of the proposed development and
- before any provincial permits or approvals are issued for the proposed quarry, the province should require a formal review by the Halton/Hamilton Source Protection Authority, as part of the local source protection process.

We have come a long way in preventing further tragedies since the Walkerton inquiry with Justice O'Connor's recommendations of precaution and prevention. Legislation has been written in order to comply with recommendations under the CleanWater Act and the Safe Water Drinking Act. Now is the time to adhere to that legislation and protect Carlisle's water before it is too late.

The community - and council - expects that legislation to be adhered to, and the community and council will accept nothing less.

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