

Water, traffic top quarry concerns
Catherine O'Hara, Review Staff
Published on May 01, 2009

Hundreds of local residents flocked to the Waterdown Legion Monday evening to voice concerns and learn more about St. Marys Cement's proposed Flamborough Quarry and the company's application for an aggregate licence.

The hall was divided into seven areas: site plan, planning, traffic, noise, water, natural environment and blasting. Attendees, including members of the anti-quarry group FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) and Ward 15 councillor Margaret McCarthy, had the opportunity to ask the field experts in each sector questions.

According to John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of St. Marys CBM, approximately 500 people turned out for the meeting. He reported that the community's two biggest concerns related to potential water and traffic issues.

"A concern for water, quantity of water, there's been issues for some time, and St. Marys is committed to doing the evaluation and tests that are necessary to demonstrate to the agencies and residents that the quarry will be able to operate to minimal impacts on any water issues," said Moroz.

Two display boards related to the quarry's possible impact on Carlisle residents' access to water sparked heated discussion. Present to explain and attempt to allay some of the unease was Steve Hollingshead of Aecom.

"If there's no water, how do you fix it?" asked one resident who explained he lived on the 11th Concession East. "In this case, there are all kinds of things that could be done. It depends on the circumstances of each person's well," said Hollingshead, adding that if a resident experienced water shortages, it could be a result of a shallow well.

"This is a very deep and productive aquifer, a lot of those wells could be deepened to produce water," he explained.

But that response just wasn't good enough for one Mounstberg resident, who noted that since the groundwater flows south, towards Hamilton, and the proposed quarry is located north of Carlisle. He charged residents in the Carlisle area would most likely be the first to experience water shortages as they have in the past during summer droughts.

"I find it incredible that you are suggesting that you are going to dig one big hole in the ground, suck out millions of gallons of water and you are going to tell me that the people living in Carlisle are not going to be impacted at all by their water table, when they already have a water problem," he stated.

Hollingshead noted that, once it is pumped out of the ground, the water is to be re-circulated to maintain the community's supply. He stressed that if water shortages are linked to proposed quarry, the company "will fix it."

"The Ministry of the Environment has legislation...that says that anybody that interferes with

somebody else's water supply is obligated to fix it, whether there's a quarry or not," said Hollingshead.

Pleased with the turnout at Monday's meeting, the St. Marys executive said that the drop-in format provided the company with the "opportunity to talk to a large number of people and to answer questions that they had.... it gave me, myself, a tremendous amount of time to talk to people and discuss and understand their concerns and allay them in some cases."

But Flamborough's councillor remained critical of the proceedings. "Their strategy is obviously one of divide and conquer," said McCarthy.

Flint echoed the sentiment. "I didn't like the divide and conquer approach," he said, adding that the public meeting was "adequate but not facilitating."

Flint believes a formal presentation would have allowed the community to gain a better understanding of the proposal and ensure that all residents are "hearing a consistent answer," from the company and its experts.

Flint left the Waterdown session to attend a meeting of Milton council, which voted to follow the City of Hamilton's lead by supporting unanimously a motion to object to St. Marys' aggregate licence application.

"As a community, we've already realized that our case will be strengthened if we have unanimous support from all agencies and government....All the stakeholders are lining up against this thing," said Flint.

According to McCarthy, the timing of both municipalities' objections was perfect, falling within the licence application's 45-day opposition period, which expires May 21.

Unaware of the Town of Milton's decision Monday, Moroz said: "In my opinion it's premature. I guess my viewpoint on that is some of the information that I have seen, I have some concerns that there is some inaccurate information and there hasn't been the forum to answer questions and satisfy some of the concerns."

Residents with questions, concerns or objections to St. Marys aggregate licence can file their comments by May 21. Information on how to do so can be found on the FORCE website, www.stopthequarry.ca .

According to a handout provided by St. Marys on Monday, questions or concerns with the proposed 11th Concession quarry's licence must be delivered to St. Marys and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. "Any objection that is not submitted to both parties may be considered invalid," states the document.