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Hamilton, Halton politicians urged to nix quarry bid

Heated debate continues at packed Milton meeting

Melanie Cummings, Special to the Review

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Hamilton and Halton regional politicians have until November 10 to turn down a Mississauga company's plans to create a quarry in Flamborough near Milton.

This makeshift deadline, set by Campbellville resident Kevin Brackley, also comes with a condition.

If the proposal isn't rejected by then, voters may throw out incumbent hopefuls when they cast their municipal ballots November 13, warned Brackley, who heads the Milton Ratepayers Association.

His ultimatum was met with mass applause from the 150 people who attended a public information session last Wednesday night at Milton District High School.

Brackley said residents have waited too long for an end to come to this proposal. "It's time our elected politicians walked the talk in Halton," he added.

Presentations by officials from Halton Region and the applicant, Lowndes Holdings, were followed by 15 public delegations opposed to the quarry. Among them was the grassroots group Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) and Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy.

"No reasonable person would approve a quarry in this area," said FORCE chairperson Graham Flint. A standing ovation followed his plea for residents to stand united in their opposition.

Battle lines have been drawn between quarry proponent Lowndes Holdings and FORCE since September, 2004, when the initial application was filed with Hamilton's City Hall.

Lowndes wants to excavate dolostone from 68 hectares (168 acres) of vacant land at the northeast corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line. Crushed dolostone aggregate is used in construction to build roads and homes.

Councillor McCarthy told residents that she believes the application will be turned down at all levels.

"(As elected representatives) we are committed to doing this dance and we have no opportunity to do otherwise by legislation, but we will be victorious in the end," she said.

Damage and congestion to and on local roads, possible shortages and contamination of groundwater, industrial noise from blasting, crushing and hauling the limestone and dust and truck pollution were among the main concerns cited by residents.

Scientist and outdoor educator Jerry Bloom is also worried about the impact the quarry will have on insects, fish, bird, plant and wildlife. Within the forests that abut the proposed quarry site stands the nationally declared, endangered Butternut tree. The officially threatened Jefferson salamander also lives in there, as well as the 'at risk' redbreast dace fish.

"We have to protect the site for ourselves, the 66 bird species, the 386 flora species, and for the rest of the world," said Bloom.

According to material published by Lowndes Holdings, the Mountsberg quarry will create 110 fulltime jobs, and \$3 million in local economic activity.

It claims that the aggregate from the quarry is needed to fill an "approaching critical shortage" and estimates the current supply excavated from six other area quarries will be exhausted by 2010.

Neighbouring Milton Limestone closed down in 2001 and Halton Crushed Stone has exhausted its supply of limestone, reducing local aggregate production by about 3,000,000 tonnes per year, said Lowndes environmental engineer Bob Long.

Lowndes also predicts that as a result of the shortage, taxes will rise due to costs incurred from importing the stone from other locales.

According to Long, "This quarry is essential to Ontario's growth."

Further reports detailing test results on groundwater mitigation, traffic studies, environmental impact and pollution and dust controls are expected to be submitted by the company in the fall, at which point they will be reviewed by city and regional staff in Hamilton and Halton, the public and council members.



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