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St. Mary's cites company track record to gain public confidence

Dianne Cornish

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Water quality and quantity, haul routes, noise, dust and blasting.

If these concerns sound familiar to opponents of the planned St. Mary's Flamborough Quarry, they are also the same concerns that the large aggregate company pledges to incorporate in ongoing studies on the quarry proposed for northeast Flamborough. John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of CBM Aggregates, reinforced the pledge last week during an exclusive interview with the Review.

The executive officer said the St. Mary's Cement Group has listened and heard the major concerns of area residents and will ensure they are addressed as new hydrogeology and traffic studies go forward. The concerns were expressed at Community Open Houses staged by the company last month at the quarry site office on 11th Concession Road East as well as during one-to-one conversations between quarry officials and residents during a door-to-door canvass. Others have been phoned in to a company hotline at 1-866-602-0080.

Citing St. Mary's 90-year history in the aggregate business, Moroz said, "I think we have a very credible background and have demonstrated that we are a good corporate citizen in terms of the environment."

In a community newsletter mailed to area residents this week, St. Mary's notes that throughout the company's long history in Ontario, "none of our operations have ever depleted or contaminated a public water supply." Hydrogeological studies currently underway at the site will "determine the best ways to avoid impacting water quality and supply," the brochure says, while also promising that the company will monitor groundwater once the site is operational "to ensure there is no impact."

A water recirculation system, which will entail building a trench around the perimeter of the quarry, has been proposed and will be tested on site this fall or early next year. The system will, through a series of drilled holes in the base of the trench, cause the water to filter through the rock, back into the quarry.

"I think people have a misconception that we pump a lot of water (off site)," Moroz said. "The bulk does not leave the site," he stressed, noting that the only water leaving the quarry will be on the surface of rocks shipped from the site.

Water is used to rinse stone and wash products on site, he explained. It is pumped out of quarries that go below groundwater level because a dry working floor is needed to mine the aggregate.

To allay residents' fears about possible diesel fuel spills on site, Moroz said the company has state-of-the-art containment equipment to prevent spills. Diesel fuel and lubricants needed for on-site quarry trucks and loaders are stored in double walled tanks, he said.

While the revelation of possible haul routes raised the hackles of residents at the recent Open Houses, Moroz said it's important to remember all routes are proposed at this stage and will undergo further public scrutiny as part of the ongoing planning process, most likely this fall.

When asked about a proposed route that would see trucks going south along Centre Road and through an

intersection bordered by two elementary schools (Balaclava and Our Lady of Mount Carmel), Moroz explained that objections raised through the public process could result in that option being tossed out. "It might not be an appropriate route because of the schools. It may not be designated as a haul route," he said.

St. Mary's has hired consultants to do a traffic analysis study that will, in turn, be examined by an independent peer review team selected by the City of Hamilton and paid for by the aggregate company.

Questions about noise, dust and blasting are also answered in the latest newsletter. The company has the right to refuse to load trucks if independent quarry truck drivers violate its trucking policies, which include rules about local speed limits, routes, arriving before operational hours, obeying road signs and making sure that trucks are in good operating condition. Company penalties are taken seriously by the truckers because their livelihood is affected if they are turned away without a load, Moroz said.

Regular watering and sweeping of roads will minimize the rock dust caused by quarry mining, the brochure says. Tree screens around the site are also effective.

A number of mitigating measures are proposed to address residents' concerns about noise and vibration from blasting. These could include noise barriers, such as tree screens or earthen embankments (berms), acoustic fences, and noise buffers at the source. Many quarries schedule blasting at the same time of day, a time agreed to after consulting with area residents.

For those worried about the effects of blasting on their home's foundation, the newsletter advises it is standard in the aggregate industry to use a series of small blasts separated by milliseconds, in place of one large blast. "This ensures that the vibrations pose no threat to home foundations," the newsletter concludes.

Moroz and Bill Marquardt, CBM St. Mary's manager of resource development, also responded to concerns about the quarry's possible impact on designated natural heritage sites, provincially significant wetlands (PSWs) and environmentally sensitive areas on the quarry site.

Of the 380 acres comprising the quarry site, only 42 per cent will be extracted leaving the sensitive areas untouched, Moroz said. "There are no PSWs or natural sites in the extraction area," Marquardt echoed.

Marquardt said the company has "a good track record of dealing with community concerns." It has accommodated residents' concerns by planting tree screens and changing the phasing of operations at other quarry sites. At the Aberfoyle pit, when neighbouring residents complained about the backup beepers on trucks, the company got agreement from the Ministry of Labour to use strobe lights in place of beepers.

"Through the process, we will demonstrate to people here that we will look after their concerns," Moroz vowed.

Northeast Flamborough and Campbellville area residents got an opportunity to react to the company newsletter at a public meeting hosted this week at Balaclava School by Flamborough councilor Margaret McCarthy. St. Mary's officials declined an invitation to attend the meeting. A report on the public meeting will be published in a future issue of the Review.



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