

Future of proposed quarry site unknown | FlamboroughReview.com

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File photo by Gary Yokoyama • MWMG

By Dianne Cornish • Review Staff

The proposal for a quarry in northeast Flamborough is dead. But questions remain about what St Marys Cement (SMC) will do with the land on 11th Concession Road East near Milburgh Line.

Last Friday, the Ontario government and SMC reached an agreement to ensure that the proposed Flamborough Quarry will not be built. The government agreed to pay the aggregate company \$15 million to cover its costs on the project up until the April 2010 decision by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to impose a zoning freeze on the quarry lands, said MPP Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale). SMC was seeking \$22 million in compensation for its planning and aggregate application costs.



The agreement covers 215 hectares of agricultural land in Ontario's greenbelt, 158 hectares of which the company had planned to develop as a quarry. According to McMeekin, a conservation easement will be placed on the property "to prohibit, in perpetuity, current and all future owners from developing it as a quarry."

SMC, for its part, has agreed to withdraw all legal actions, including a \$275-million (US) challenge against the Canadian government under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for the estimated loss of revenue resulting from the company's failure to secure approval of its quarry plan.

McMeekin said he was pleased to see a resolution of the longstanding dispute between the aggregate company and the government. It will protect the wetlands, ecological system and water conservation on the site, he said.

"For me, this is the end of what has been a long and painful process," he said alluding to the battle against the quarry that began almost nine years ago.

Graham Flint, chair of FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), a grassroots citizens' group that has fought the quarry from the start, was elated with the news, but said he "wants to see the details to make sure everything is there" before celebrating victory.

In a written statement provided last Friday, John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of SMC confirmed that the company has abandoned plans for the quarry. While there was no information immediately available about what the aggregate company plans to do with the site, Moroz elaborated on the company's rationale for abandoning the project. "Given that there was

no possibility of a resolution in the near term, we concluded it's now time to put this behind us, and focus on managing and growing our employment, investment and operations in other parts of Ontario."

Flint said the planning of a community celebration "will be determined by what happens next," including the possibility of sitting down with company representatives to discuss their plans for the rural Flamborough property. A party will likely be held sometime before mid-June, he added.

Flamborough Councillor Judi Partridge who represents Ward 15, where the quarry was proposed, said she feels greatly relieved by the agreement, but like Flint, is cautious about what it all means. While the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will return zoning responsibility for the lands to the City of Hamilton and a conservation easement has been placed on title to ensure that no quarry can be built on the site, she said she would feel more content if questions about the land's future use were answered. "I still think there's some loose ends and would feel much better about celebrating if they were tied up."

She believes about the only thing the company can build on the greenbelt lands is a golf course, but says, "That still presents challenges with water."

"I would feel better if the land were donated to Conservation Halton," she said, suggesting that SMC could afford the gesture given the settlement it received.

Partridge's predecessor Margaret McCarthy, who retired from municipal politics in 2010 after shepherding many resolutions opposing the quarry through Hamilton city council, also feels uneasy about the cash award paid for SMC by taxpayers. "I'm naturally delighted (with the agreement), but I guess I'm still a fighter. I would have asked them for some money for what they put us through."

"It is just as much a victory for the City of Hamilton as it is for Flamborough," McCarthy said of the quarry project's demise. "It's nice to finally get the pronouncement," she added. "I've always believed there were substantive environmental issues, resolutions and policies spanning the property to prevent any quarry from ever taking foot."

Ward 14 councillor and Mountsberg area farmer, Robert Pasuta said he first learned of the quarry plan when he was president of the Hamilton-Wentworth Federation of Agriculture and Flint came to a federation meeting asking for – and receiving – its support. When he later became a member of city council, Pasuta said he was happy to support resolutions against the quarry.

"The quarry site wasn't that far away from my property; it was less than a kilometre from one of my farms," he said. "For me, that was in a significant wetland and a recharge area for water," he said of the quarry site. "It just wasn't the right location for a quarry."