

Quarry objections under review

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Officials with St. Marys Cement (SMC) will spend the next several months trying to resolve the objections of residents, municipalities, government agencies and key community stakeholders to its application for an aggregate licence from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). The company is seeking a licence for a proposed quarry on 11th Concession East and Milborough Line.

Hundreds of objection letters were sent to the aggregate company and the MNR during the 45-day notification and consultation period for the application that ended last Thursday. And there could be more.

FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) confirmed the known number of objection letters this week, with its chair Graham Flint explaining that more than 750 individual letters were copied to the group by local residents, farmers, business people and supporters from across the Greater Toronto Area. These don't include objections submitted by the City of Hamilton, City of Burlington, Town of Milton, Region of Halton, public health agencies including Hamilton Public Health Services, Conservation Halton, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, the Ontario Ministry of the Natural Resources, Hamilton-Wentworth Federation of Agriculture, Halton Federation of Agriculture, national environmental organizations including Environmental Defence and public and private school representatives including the Hamilton- Wentworth District School Board, Balaclava Public School Council and Hillfield Strathallan College in Hamilton.

Reacting to the volume of objections, a St. Mary's spokesperson said Wednesday, "It's not unexpected." Melanie Horton, the company's director of land resources stated, "given the level of interest and different public meetings, the numbers are pretty consistent with the turnouts."

The Kissing Bridge licence application by another aggregate company has attracted a similar number of objections in the Puslinch area, she noted.

Diane Schwier, aggregate specialist with the MNR's Guelph office, told the *Review* this week that she couldn't confirm the total number of objections because the final tally isn't complete.

Flint, however, is elated with the results that can be confirmed at this stage. "The consultation results clearly leave St. Marys Cement 'between a rock and a hard place,'" he said. "Every key stakeholder has objected to this proposed quarry development, from governments to community interests to the public."

Flint credited the community for achieving the result by turning out in large numbers for the FORCE public meeting and the public information session hosted by SMC last month to show continued opposition to the proposal.

Objection letters cited numerous issues, including hydrogeology and drinking water concerns, natural features such as provincially significant wetlands and species at risk on the site, transportation and haul routes, other social and economic community impacts, and Official Plan and Greenbelt Act compliance.

The MNR, the regulatory body that will determine if a licence is granted, also filed an objection. Mike Stone, a regional planner with the ministry's Guelph office, submitted a seven-page letter with questions, concerns and comments about the application stating, "...the ministry is not in a position to support the licence, at this time."

Horton said all of the objections will be answered either by mail or face-to-face in the case where a resident has a particular concern about an individual property. She didn't discount the possibility of holding a public meeting to answer concerns outlined in a template letter that FORCE composed and offered to residents.

Apart from devising a master list of complaints in concert with the MNR and FORCE, Horton said the company will also tally the number of households that sent objections as a number of the submissions came from multiple people in the same household. A complete tally is expected to be available next week.

SMC will review the results of the consultation and attempt to resolve the objections before presenting its final package to the MNR. It has until April 3, 2011 to complete that part of the process. Before the two-year timeline expires, the company will notify any remaining objectors and give them 20 days to reconfirm their objections. If the objections aren't confirmed, the MNR will consider them to be withdrawn.

If there are still outstanding objections after the April, 2011 deadline, the MNR has three options: reject or approve the licence or refer the application to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Horton wouldn't speculate on how long it will take to answer the objections. "Some involve technical issues and it will take longer if field work is required," she said.

The St. Marys representative also charged that the company has been the object of "unfair comment by

opponents to the Flamborough Quarry project.” While acknowledging that the project is controversial, she said, “We want to make sure they (area residents) have the right information and are not relying on opinions and interpretations.”

Specifically, the company was offended by wording in a motion passed by the City of Hamilton last month as its objection to the licence application. Reference was made to St. Marys Cement “showing complete disregard for the welfare of our community” by suddenly shifting the focus of the approval process from the municipal government to the provincial government by filing an application for an aggregate licence.

“The reputation of both St. Marys and Votorantim (its parent company) has been unfairly criticized...” Horton said, noting that Votorantim was recently ranked number 20 on the 2009 World’s Most Reputable Companies list by the Reputation Institute. “This ranking, the result of a reputable, third-party organization, recognizes our ongoing commitment to the communities where we operate.”



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