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Lowndes under new ownership

Quarry proposal still going ahead

Robin Downton-Poirier, Special to the Champion

Published on Jun 27, 2006

In a startling move last Tuesday, St. Marys Cement Group announced the purchase of Lowndes Holdings Corp., including the site proposed to be a limestone quarry in Flamborough.

The move made those opposed to the quarry "a little nervous" but still determined to fight, said Graham Flint, chair of Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE).

"We're a little nervous about the purchase, but we're continuing to move ahead with our mission to stop the quarry. It doesn't matter if the trucks say 'Lowndes Holdings' or 'St. Mary's Cement', we don't want them at all in our community," said Flint.

FORCE formed not long after Lowndes Holdings announced its intentions to apply for a permit to build a limestone quarry on a 380-plus-acre site on 11th Concession in Flamborough in May 2004.

The formal application was made to the City of Hamilton in September 2004 and, after being reviewed by a Peer Review Team, was sent back to Lowndes Holdings listing many areas of concern to be addressed.

Now with the company under the ownership of St. Marys Cement Group -- a manufacturer of cement and construction products in Canada and the United States -- the application will continue to move ahead, said Bill Marquardt, project manager for the proposed quarry.

Although still opposed to the quarry, Flint said he hopes the new ownership will bring a "more open process."

"St. Mary's Cement has agreed to meet with us, and a level of communication is something we've hoped for and may actually receive now," said Flint.

Marquardt said with St. Marys' "proven track record and reputation of being a responsible neighbour," it can make the proposed quarry a success.

He said St. Marys will develop plans for the site over the next few months, making the hydrogeological studies a top priority. As plans progress, it will host community information sessions to update residents and address concerns, he said.

In the meantime, a hotline (1-866-602-0080) and e-mail address (communityinfo@stmaryscbm.com) has been established for residents to obtain more information.

Flint stated that, even with St. Marys' willingness to communicate, it doesn't change the issues that make residents opposed to the quarry. "It doesn't matter whose name is on the gate, the same issues remain (water, traffic, and the environment), and we are determined to continue fighting."



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