



<http://www.miltoncanadianchampion.com/news/article/56348>

## Residents warned about St. Mary's PR campaign

Dianne Cornish, Special to the Champion

Published on Oct 24, 2006

After initially being unnerved by the announcement that St. Mary's Cement will now be leading the charge for the proposed quarry in northeast Flamborough, members of a grassroots citizen's group opposed to the project have regrouped and come out swinging.

At a public meeting at Balaclava School recently, area residents were advised not to be fooled by the "slick" PR campaign that the large aggregate company is expected to unfold in coming months.

St. Mary's, which became owners of the quarry site at 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line in June, will try to win residents over in a variety of ways with "corporate slick messaging," Graham Flint, chair of FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), told The Champion recently.

He made similar charges while addressing a crowd of about 200 residents who filled the Carlisle school's auditorium during the information meeting organized by Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy.

While acknowledging that St. Mary's is "much more experienced and professional" and has "much, much deeper pockets" than the site's previous owner, Lowndes Holdings Corp., Flint reminded the crowd that the "real issues" firing opposition to the quarry remain.

The 158-hectare (390-acre) site is surrounded by existing rural communities, has significant hydrogeologic and environmental features and limited transportation options for haul routes, he said.

Using a virus as a metaphor, the FORCE chair warned residents to be wary of "the St. Mary's virus"-- a.k.a. its public relations campaign -- and "vaccinate" against it by being aware of the issues.

He predicted the campaign will try to win over residents by disarming them into believing there's nothing to worry about, charming them into accepting the proposed quarry and pitting residents against each other. The company might make large donations to community arenas or charities to gain public favour, he suggested.

Flint pointed to a recent community newsletter as an example of how disarming the company can be, saying that it mentions every concern and tries to convey the message to residents that there's nothing to worry about. But the facts don't change, he argued. "They can't show us our water won't be impacted."

Possible impacts to the groundwater from quarry operations dominated much of the discussion at the meeting. Noting that part of the wellhead protection zone providing water for area wells and the communal water system in Carlisle is located on the quarry site, Councillor McCarthy talked about "water woes" that already exist in the area and the need "not to mess with our most precious resource."

She attacked the idea of the water recirculation system proposed by St. Mary's as a method of recharging the aquifer with water after it is pumped from the quarry floor.

"It's new and untested and hasn't been used on fractured bedrock," she told the crowd.

A hydrogeologist hired by McCarthy to conduct an independent review of environmental reports on the quarry backed up McCarthy's misgivings about an unproven water recirculation system.

Ian Macdonald, of WESA (Water and Earth Science Associates), a Kitchener-based environmental sciences consulting company, said the "major shortcoming" of the proposed system is, "It's purely conceptual and there's no proof it works."

Macdonald said he holds serious doubts about the ability of an operation on the scale proposed by St. Mary's to reintroduce the water into the ground from the quarry floor.

"Getting water back into the ground is difficult. It's harder to get water back into the bedrock than to extract it," he stressed.

#### MOVING WATER INTO TRENCHES DIFFICULT, SAYS CONSULTANT

Macdonald also said it'll be difficult to get water to move away from the quarry into the recirculation trenches with such strong gradients toward the quarry.

A man in the crowd said a St. Mary's executive told him that the company knows the groundwater recirculation system is conceptual, but also said, "This is the way we're going to do it... this will work." He asked Macdonald: "Are we being deceived?"

"That's a pretty naive approach," the consultant said, adding that the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), which approves aggregate extraction permits, "will not accept that."

St. Mary's officials have said the system will be tested on the site late this year or early next year. Results of the test will be shared with various stakeholders, including the MNR, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation Halton and the City of Hamilton.

Another audience member asked if there are any Provincial guidelines regulating the reintroduction of water into the aquifer. Macdonald said the water has to be of good quality and it must be shown that it will not affect other users of that water.

Representatives of St. Mary's were invited to attend the meeting, but declined saying they weren't ready to discuss the project in such a forum "at this time."

Flint said FORCE has sent a letter to company officials asking them to meet with members of its steering committee to discuss community concerns about the proposed quarry.



<http://www.miltoncanadianchampion.com/news/article/56348>



© Copyright 2007 Metroland Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved. The reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from [www.niagarathisweek.com](http://www.niagarathisweek.com) is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

