



The Halton Compass

August 2, 2007
Volume 10
Issue 10

Read by 150,000 people each week

New wrinkle in St Mary's quarry application

BY DON REDMOND

If St. Mary's wasn't facing enough public opposition to its quarry application at 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Townline, yet another fly in the ointment for the proponent has been unearthed - or in this case, almost literally unearthed.

Twigg'd by a letter from a local resident, Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy discovered after questioning the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) that two separate properties - one on Mountsberg Road, the other on Campbellville Road - were routinely used as dumping grounds for a Mississauga refinery back in the mid-1960s.

At that time, the properties which stretched between Mountsberg and Campbellville Roads was owned by Clarkson Refinery and was one single large lot. It is now two separate properties, owned by area residents.

But more to the point, this property is just 2.7 kilometres away for the proposed Flamborough quarry site, which itself is directly across the street from Campbellville.

McCarthy is concerned that if St. Mary's is given its water-taking application from the MOE to test its groundwater recirculation equipment, long-buried, decades-old toxins could find

Continued on page 5

New wrinkle in St Mary's quarry application...

Continued from page 1

their way back to the surface.

While the MOE official holding the St. Mary's file assured McCarthy that "the (affected) property is to the northwest and outside the capture zone of the Carlisle wells as depicted by your source protection consultants," he also acknowledged that the MOE investigated and discovered that "between 1964 and 1965, tank-bottom refinery sludges were illegally disposed of at (the resident's) property." He continued that two refuse tanks were removed from the property in 1965 and a third was yanked out of the ground in the late-1970s.

The MOE then conducted a geophysical survey in 1982 and again in 2002 to confirm all the tanks had been removed.

In 1995, the MOE hired a consultant to "complete a hydrogeological investigation of the groundwater on the property. Nine monitoring wells were installed and sampled regularly." After nine years of testing, the MOE declared the property safe and decommissioned the monitoring wells.

When David Kerr, the hydrogeologist hired by Hamilton to examine the St. Mary's application, looked at the information, he agreed that the situation might no longer be threatening - though with a handful of reservations.

After reviewing the MOE's files, Kerr said he believes that since this all happened in the 1960s, "it is likely that the majority of the contamination has already migrated through the creek system and out into Lake Ontario. Over the last 40 years, groundwater has likely followed this pathway, further diluted and transporting any residual organics to Bronte Creek (and into the lake)."

However, he also cautioned that "it is possible that there still remains lower solubility organic residual mass on-site and in close proximity to the site that may be trapped in bedrock fractures or on top of the rock," meaning simply that some of the thicker sludge might stay put rather than go with the water flow.

Still, he added that he would be surprised that such residual mass wasn't detected by the MOE's nine years of monitoring.

Again, while restating his belief that the contaminants are likely gone, he noted that his professional "opinion is based on limited information. Contaminant migration and groundwater flow in fractured bedrock can be extremely complicated and uncertain due to the many variables that need to be considered."

To that end, he said he will be requesting that the MOE hand over their entire files on the investigation and subsequent clean-up and further to that, asking the ministry to "include conditions on any permit (if issued) to St. Mary's for the pumping test that requires sampling for organics at regular time intervals during testing."

Kerr is also insisting that St. Mary's have a "contingency system with triggers (which can) be instituted to ensure pump testing is ceased in the event there is any indication of contaminant migration as a result of the test."

That, in itself, could be a tall order. The permit-to-take-water application St. Mary's has into the MOE calls for 12.7 million litres of water to be drawn daily for a 20-day water recirculation equipment testing period.