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## FORCE lauds city for water warning

BY DON REDMOND

A four-page letter from the Hamilton Health Department to the Ministry of Environment that details numerous concerns over St. Mary's application for a Permit-to-take-water (PTTW) is being held up by anti-quarry group FORCE as proof that the applicant should be not given permission.

The letter from Eric Mathews, the manager of the Health Protection Division of the city's Public Health Service, was sent on October 26 to the MOE's Paul Odom, the supervisor of water resources in the MOE's Hamilton office and ultimately, the bureaucrat who decides whether or not St. Mary's gets its PTTW.

The PTTW, requested by St. Mary's to test its water-recirculation equipment, has come under fire as residents are concerned over the million-litres-per-day of water that would be drawn from the aquifer during the three-week trial.

Mathew's concerns over the PTTW were so grave that he brought them to Odom's attention under Section 11 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

The seldom-invoked Section 11 is called upon only when a municipality has a concern so serious that the Medical Officer of Health flagged it to the Province's attention.

"Our research shows this (Section 11 citing) is a very rare occurrence," FORCE chair Graham Flint told the Compass. "Basically, when something is this much of a risk to the public health, the city has to put up its hand and say we have a real problem here."

Among Mathew's concerns were the contamination in the 1970s of a property just three kilometers away from the St. Mary's site, the impacts on the local water supply to Carlisle, the lack of a contingency plan should the testing impact the water supply, the potential for turbidity caused by the water recirculation and the potential for groundwater contamination.

"As we have said all along, water is the key issue in this quarry application," Flint said. "There are other big issues such as the transportation routes of the gravel trucks but to us, that's putting the cart in front of the horse."

"Water is the number one concern and this PTTW has the potential to have disastrous consequences. This letter shows that Hamilton is echoing the concerns of the community."

By issuing the warning, Flint said Mathews has now "put the matter in the Province's lap."

"We're hoping that this might be the point where they (the Province) finally step in and put an end to this application. Protecting our public health and drinking water is the single most important reason why government decision makers at all levels must reject the proposed quarry for the Flamborough area," said Flint. "If the McGuinty government truly believes in all of its clean water initiatives post-Walkerton, this government has a duty to act and to act now."

Others echoed his sentiment, including Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director of Environmental Defence, who said, "This public health letter is a wake-up call to provincial decision makers. This application challenges both the protection of Ontario's Greenbelt and implementation of the new Clean Water Act."