

Walkout cuts short quarry workshop

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Published on Jan 18, 2008

A St. Marys Cement official called it "a lost opportunity" for public input, while a Flamborough councillor described it as a "total disregard of democratic process."

A planned workshop on potential haul routes for the proposed St. Marys Flamborough quarry didn't get off the ground last Wednesday night as close to 200 area residents took part in a mass exodus from the meeting hall in the Carlisle Arena. Councillor Margaret McCarthy, who represents Flamborough Ward 15 in Hamilton, urged residents to show their "unified opposition" to the quarry by leaving the meeting without participating in the two-and-a-half-hour program planned by the aggregate company.

St. Marys Cement wants to establish a large quarry on 11th Concession Road East in northeast Flamborough and Milborough Line, the boundary that separates Milton and Flamborough. Last week's workshop was the third in a series of four meetings hosted by St. Marys as part of its haul route study.

McCarthy, who had urged area residents to turn out in large numbers for the Carlisle meeting, turned the tables on organizers, commandeering the microphone at the outset of the session to warn residents of the danger of participating in the exercise. The councillor was openly critical of the meeting's format, which restricted participation to about 90 residents who were asked to pre-register. All participants were given workbooks listing evaluation criteria, including aquatic environment and land uses as they relate to the proposed haul routes, and asked to provide their feedback.

McCarthy argued that the process wasn't inclusive enough and said, "...it is my advice, my warning, that these workbooks, and the programmed responses that they are designed to elicit, will never serve any beneficial purpose to us. They will, most certainly, be used to our disadvantage."

Environmental consultant Don Richardson, who emceed the meeting, urged area residents to stay and provide feedback on the evaluation criteria for the haul routes, but to no avail. The majority of residents, including most of the 90 who had pre-registered, left the hall. Less than a dozen remained to study and fill



Barbara Laking (right) looks over the workbook distributed at last week's quarry meeting in Carlisle.

out the workbooks.

St. Marys vice-president and general manager John Moroz expressed disappointment in the turn of events. "The process has kind of been shortchanged. We didn't get a chance to talk to people and introduce the workbooks."

Had they been given that opportunity, Moroz said everything in the workbook would have been put into perspective. "Every single question in this booklet is in the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the haul route study developed by CART (Combined Aggregate Review Team)," he said. "They all specifically relate to the haul route."

CART was formed by the City of Hamilton in 2005 to ensure that various stakeholders and agencies get an opportunity to have technical input into the quarry proposal. One of the functions of the group, which includes representation from the City of Hamilton, the Town of Milton, Halton Region and local conservation authorities, was to establish a Terms of Reference for the haul route study process.

Graham Flint, who heads FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), said residents who left the meeting wanted to show they're not interested in moving the quarry project forward.

"St. Marys wants the public to validate their (haul route) study," he said. "We feel that the public is being used to strengthen their case."

Flint said comments from Richardson as he urged residents to remain at the workshop and "help us complete this work" only served to add credence to the group's suspicions that the aggregate company wants public input only "to move their application forward."

While not denying that the workbooks contained evaluation criteria outlined in the city's TOR, he said the criteria is the minimum expected of the company. The fact that the workbook's contents mirrored what is in the TOR shows "a propensity (by St. Marys) to do the minimum amount of work required," Flint charged.

The FORCE chair acknowledged that he was among those who pre-registered for the meeting. As head of the anti-quarry group, he said he felt compelled to attend, but when the event "took on a life of its own" and most people decided to show their opposition to the quarry by not participating in the process, he chose to do the same.

Amongst the handful of residents who remained to study the workbook and provide comments was a Moffat man who owns and rents commercial properties in Campbellville. Requesting anonymity, he said, "I'm interested in getting more information on this. I don't want to see a haul route on the main street of

Campbellville."

He suggested that St. Marys look at "greener" ways of transporting its aggregate, such as by rail, and noted that an excellent opportunity exists at the Guelph Junction to transport product from the quarry by rail to Toronto and beyond, including American destinations, such as Baltimore.

A Burlington cyclist, who enjoys the scenery and wooded landscape of Milborough Line, said she's opposed to the quarry but, if it does get approval, she would want the haul route to be as short as possible. According to maps provided by St. Marys for the study, the most direct route would see trucks travel from the site, up Milborough Line to Campbellville Road, then onto Twiss Road and Reid Sideroad before connecting with Hwy. 401.

While admitting that the workshop didn't get the community input it was designed to, Moroz said the aggregate company's next step is to meet with CART members and "lay out our path forward." The date and location for the fourth and final haul route meeting is not yet known.



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