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Groups unite to oppose quarry plan

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The Hamilton Spectator

FLAMBOROUGH (Jan 10, 2008)

A national environmental organization and a local anti-quarry group are teaming up to convince Premier Dalton McGuinty that safe drinking water is more important than a new source of crushed construction stone for the Greater Toronto Area.

Toronto-based Environmental Defence and Flamborough's FORCE want the premier to block plans for a limestone quarry on 11th Concession East at Millborough Road -- close to the borders of Hamilton, Milton and Burlington.

The groups say keeping the 13-storey-deep pit dry will require pumping that could cut off or contaminate water-supplying wells serving the Carlisle settlement area as well as farms and homes in the surrounding rural area.

They published a full-page advertisement in Tuesday's Hamilton Spectator that will also run in four community newspapers. It calls on McGuinty to stop the quarry now, without further study or debate.

Karman Wong, speaking for the premier, reacted by saying: "This proposed project is in its very early stages.

"However, there have been concerns brought forward that we take seriously and intend to look into."

Wong added: "Any proposed project that does not meet our standards will not move ahead.

"The health and safety of the local community is our priority."

The ad notes that Hamilton's department of public health services formally notified the Ministry of the Environment last month that a pilot pumping test -- for which St. Marys Cement is seeking an MOE permit -- presents enough risk to constitute a public health hazard.

The text says, in part: "Mr. McGuinty, it's time to 'walk the talk' and act on your commitment under the Clean Water Act."

FORCE vice-chair Mark Rudolph, an environmental consultant, said the water-taking permit application has been pending for months.

But "we know at some point in time the province is going to have to act, so our target and focus now are clearly on the McGuinty government."

St. Marys vice-president John Moroz first said: "To suggest that the pumping test would compromise quantity or quality of local water is inaccurate and irresponsible."

When asked if he meant the health department was being irresponsible, he replied: "You need to be careful. I think that letter expressed a number of concerns.

"By giving more detailed answers on some of those issues brought to the surface, we can satisfy the health department."

He insisted there's no need for the premier to stop the quarry at this stage.

"We're trying to do a pumping test that would allow us to demonstrate there isn't a concern.

"If we encounter any unanticipated issues, there's a tremendous amount of monitoring and the pumping test would be stopped immediately."

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