

Water worries in Carlisle

Anti-quarry group upset Liberals are allowing permit for testing

Eric McGuinness

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The anti-quarry group FORCE is angry at the McGuinty government for letting the Ministry of the Environment process a permit for tests in which St. Marys Cement would pump millions of litres of water a day from the aquifer supplying Carlisle municipal wells.

Despite calls on the Liberal government to halt further consideration of St. Marys' proposed quarry on Milborough Line at 11th Concession East, the ministry is inviting public comment until June 6 on draft terms of the permit.

FORCE notes the ministry is also proposing the allowance of testing this summer -- when lawn watering will be limited in Carlisle -- even though regional director Bill Bardswick told hundreds of residents at a public meeting last month there would be no summer tests at the request of the City of Hamilton.

Jennifer Hall, ministry spokesperson, said yesterday the city withdrew its request after further technical review.

City officials say summer water use is restricted in Carlisle because of the size of the water storage tower, not the supply of groundwater.

Opponents are particularly concerned about tests of a groundwater recirculation system they call theoretical and unproven, a system in which water pumped from the quarry floor would be channelled into a trench designed to let it percolate back into the aquifer supplying area wells, streams and wetlands.

They say further consideration of the quarry and its water-taking permit should wait for the new Halton-Hamilton Source Protection Committee to study what needs to be done to ensure the quality and quantity of Carlisle's water supply.

A FORCE news release points out the ministry posting on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry coincides with Drinking Water Week and this month's eighth anniversary of the Walkerton well-water tragedy that led to Ontario's Clean Water Act and establishment of source water protection committees.

Chair Graham Flint is quoted as saying: "How ironic that the very government that cites its drinking water protection initiatives after Walkerton as a major achievement would allow this test on this invasive development to proceed before our local source protection committee even gets a chance to do its real work."

Quarry pumping tests

* The draft permit for water pumping at the Flamborough quarry site would allow St. Marys Cement to conduct three tests, each six to eight days long, and to pump up to 4.5 million litres of water a day, enough to fill an Olympic-size swimming pool 1 1/2 times.

* The ministry says that's half the rate the company originally proposed, reduced after independent hydrogeological experts concluded equivalent results could be obtained.

* Owners of all wells potentially affected must be notified at least a week in advance and given written notice of how to report complaints.

* One or more independent consultants must be hired to supervise firms conducting the tests.

* The full, 13-page draft permit can be read at the Environmental Bill of Rights registry website, www.ebr.gov.on.ca. Search for Registry No. 010-3469.

* Comments must be submitted no later than June 6 by fax to 905-521-7640, by e-mail to MOEWCR.Permits@ontario.ca or by mail to 119 King St. W., 12th Floor, Hamilton, Ont., L8P 4Y7. For further information from the ministry, phone 905-521-7833.

* St. Marys Cement has a project website at www.flamboroughquarry.ca. FORCE's website is www.stopthequarry.ca.

emcguinness@thespec.com

905-526-4650

thespec.com

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