

Cement company starts tests

Move forward despite community group's plea regarding proposed quarry

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St. Marys Cement began water-pumping tests for a proposed quarry yesterday, despite a plea for delay from the citizens' group FORCE.

Pumps were turned on near the centre of the 158-hectare property at 11:35 a.m. while about a dozen placard-carrying members of FORCE -- Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment -- stood quietly on the side of 11th Concession Road East.

FORCE wanted the company to wait while it tries to convince the Environmental Review Tribunal (ERT) to let it appeal a water-taking permit issued by the Ministry of the Environment.

However, the tribunal says it may lack jurisdiction because the permit is for less than a year and, therefore, not subject to appeal.

The tribunal has agreed to receive written arguments from FORCE and the company between now and Aug. 1, but the first series of tests is scheduled to end by next Tuesday.

FORCE chairman Graham Flint argued: "No testing should occur until the ERT addresses the issue of jurisdiction. St. Marys may think it can ignore FORCE and the community as it has for the last two years, but we believe they should respect the ERT and its democratic process."

St. Marys' vice-president, John Moroz, said, however: "The Ministry of the Environment is managing the process and we have not had any feedback from them to suggest we should alter the plans. Our understanding is there is no appeal process."

The ministry, Hamilton's public health services department and Conservation Halton all had staff on hand to monitor the testing and watch for any effect on Mountsberg Creek, its tributaries and area wells.

City officials have expressed concern the pumping could threaten wells supplying nearby subdivisions and the Carlisle settlement area.

The ministry even made St. Marys hire a consultant to oversee the work of consultants conducting the tests.

A technical meeting yesterday might be the largest gathering of hydrogeologists in Canada outside the profession's annual conference, quipped Dennis German of Gartner Lee Ltd.

The company says results of each day's work will be posted at flamboroughquarry.ca. FORCE's website is stopthequarry.ca

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