



Blast could dry out Carlisle wells

By Eric McGuinness

The Hamilton Spectator FLAMBOROUGH (May 25, 2007)

The City of Hamilton fears Carlisle's municipal wells could run dry if the province allows a quarry company to test a water-pumping system that would let it blast a 13-storey-deep hole to supply the Greater Toronto Area with crushed limestone.

The city is among more than 600 organizations and individuals that flooded the Ontario Environment Ministry with objections to the test proposed by St. Mary's CBM, the aggregates division of St. Mary's Cement, which wants to open a huge quarry on the 11th Concession East at Milborough Line.

Hamilton said it has "significant concern" that the St. Mary's proposal to pump up to 12.7 million litres a day out of the ground within two kilometres of Carlisle's wells could "prevent the sustained supply of water to the public."

It said CBM wants to pump at a rate of 8,800 litres per minute, compared to the 2005 Carlisle municipal well average of only 650 L/min.

It's also afraid the tests will interfere with the private wells of many rural residents, irreversibly change groundwater flows to Bronte Creek and wetlands and affect fish in Mountsberg Creek.

Paul Odom, a supervisor in the ministry's Hamilton regional office, wrote the company to say it is proceeding with caution on CBM's water-taking permit application because it involves technology not previously used in fractured limestone, such as the formation the Carlisle area relies on for water.

Odom ends the letter by noting the large number of public submissions and saying, "We wish to make it clear that the ministry deems that any impact occurring from the test, were the test to be approved, to be the liability of St. Mary's Cement Inc. (Canada)."

That enrages Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy, who told The Spectator: "It's intriguing, it's frightening, that the ministry has the authority to issue an approval but abdicates responsibility for the harm it might cause.

"If we run out of water, it's the municipality that would have to do something. We would most likely be ordered by the ministry to fix it. This is a colossal issue, not just for Flamborough but for the whole city."

Odom said the CBM permit application is on hold until the company responds to the city's concerns, submits a comprehensive work plan to a multi-agency review team studying the overall quarry plan and answers a long list of technical questions raised in the public submissions.

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WHO: St. Mary's CBM, aggregates division of St. Mary's Cement Inc. (Canada), a wholly owned subsidiary of Brazilian multinational Votorantim Cimentos. WHERE: 154 hectares of farmland, woods and wetlands on 11th Concession East at Milborough Line. WHAT: Lowndes Holdings Ltd. originally applied to excavate 96 hectares to a depth of 40 metres to produce crushed limestone, generating 1,140 truck trips a day. St. Mary's Cement has taken over the project. APPROVALS: St. Mary's needs amendments to the Official Plan and zoning bylaw of the former town of Flamborough and the former region of Hamilton-Wentworth -- now the City of Hamilton -- and a Class A quarry licence from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. The site is not on the Niagara Escarpment. MORE INFORMATION: St. Mary's Cement, www.stmaryscement.com, the anti-quarry citizens' group FORCE, stopthequarry.ca, or myhamilton.ca (search for quarry). St. Mary's Flamborough quarry plan

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