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Quarry battle not over yet

'Hang tough,' opponents told

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Residents opposed to a massive limestone quarry being dug in their midst are being told to remain on guard, even though the province has made the unprecedented move of freezing the agricultural zoning on the proposed site.

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE), which formed to oppose the quarry, and its supporters, are pointing out the fight is not over yet because the quarry company is appealing the issue to the Ontario Municipal Board.

"It's now more important than ever for the community to stay engaged," former World Wildlife Fund-Canada president Monte Hummel told the sixth annual meeting of FORCE last night.

"You've got to stick together to see this thing through ... what I call perpetual vigilance. ... Hang tough and see this thing through."

Lawyer Chris Barnett, who told the gathering he is involved in a quarry dispute in Caledon that began 13 years ago, said the length of the next chapter in the St. Marys Cement quarry saga depends on St. Marys. And lawyers for the Toronto-based firm have indicated to him the company is not giving up on establishing a quarry on a 150-hectare site on the 11th Concession.

"It is a long process," said Barnett. "There is no doubt about that. The length depends on the applicant and they've said, 'We're not pulling up the stakes.' They're not going home."

He noted an OMB hearing on the Caledon quarry just concluded after running eight months. There is no decision in that case yet.

More than 100 people attended the meeting at the Lawson Park Family Camp Resort on 11th Concession.

St. Marys Cement filed an appeal May 10, just shy of a month after Municipal Affairs Minister Jim Bradley issued a ministerial zoning order declaring the quarry site must remain agricultural and conservation land. Such an order has never been used in the development of a quarry, but had been used to halt development of the Pickering airport.

Bradley must refer the matter to the OMB, but the timeline is not clear. There was some talk proceedings could start this year.

FORCE chairperson Graham Flint told the crowd the group has a war chest of \$341,000, but must keep fundraising to ensure it is "the last man standing."

St. Marys has spent \$20 million on the quarry project since it began working on it four years ago.

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