

THE HALTON COMPASS

APRIL 24, 2008 • VOLUME 10 • ISSUE 47



Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy, back to camera, shows a piece of scrap metal to St Marys vice-president John Moroz, at the podium, during the meeting on April 16 at Our Lady of Mount Carmel elementary school, claiming the copper was found on the proposed quarry site. PHOTO BY STUART SERVICE

Flamborough councillor says St Marys' site contaminated

BY STUART SERVICE

Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy confronted St Marys Cement vice president John Moroz at an April 16 public meeting, alleging that there were contaminants on the 158-hectare proposed quarry site, located northwest of 11th Concession and Milborough Townline.

McCarthy read documents describing an investigation by Ontario's Ministry of the Environment (MOE) of the proposed quarry site during the 1990s, which "evidently consisted of shipping scrap metal and wire to the site for metal recycling," she said to Moroz as he stood at a podium before more than 350 area residents at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary School. "Recycling included burning plastic-coated wires to recover copper."

The document found the property to have a "greyish brown ash and soil composite that contained high concentration of metals such as copper, iron, calcium, aluminum, zinc and lead."

While McCarthy says a cleanup order was issued by the MOE in 1996, there were "huge gaps" in documenting the completed result in 1998. "Did you know it was a contaminated site?" McCarthy asked.

"I was aware that it was a contaminated site," Moroz replied. "When (former quarry proponent) Lowndes purchased the property, they did an environmental assessment of the property. They did identify some issues that I don't know tonight exactly what they were. But they cleaned those up and the material was dealt with properly and the MOE has issued a certificate of clearance for that property."

"One more thing, you say it's cleaned up, the scrap metal. Can you just hang on a second?" McCarthy said, reaching into a bag and holding up chunk of copper.

"It's not," she continued. "All of the MOE people, please, let's go out and take a look. I'll give you the coordinates of where this metal, this copper, is on site. It's there right now and I really want it looked after."

"We would appreciate getting that information and we'll clean it up as soon as possible," Moroz said.

"I'll give you a bag full of information," McCarthy said before an eruption of applause.

McCarthy told the Compass after the meeting that neighbours of the property were in the process of filing affidavits with her. At least one neighbour claims the property was a dumping ground for barrels of PCBs, septic tanks, lengths of copper wire and old shingles.

Another big surprise that night came from comments by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment West Central Regional director Bill Bardswick, who cautioned the audience that the ministry's authority to refuse the PTTW (permit to take water) application by St Marys is limited.

"Just to be clear in terms of us approving this test, that in no way means we endorse the quarry," Bardswick said. "I just want to tell you we have the same concerns for the quarry. Don't feel like there's no one out there watching for you - that's our job and we're going to do that job."

In a rare move by the MOE, Bardswick said the permit to take water filed by St Marys was posted on the Ministry's website, "because of the concerns that have been raised about the application." He added that previous pumping tests conducted by the company in 2004, "didn't quite cut it in terms of providing information to give us a level of confidence as to what goes on when pumping water."

Graham Flint, chair of Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE), said St Marys' PTTW will test the teeth of new

legislation tabled by the provincial government.

"There is no Plan B for this community if our water system gets impacted," Flint said. "Even if we could wait the years it would take to the engineering and planning and construction work to attempt to bring a pipe up from, say, Waterdown, the Greenbelt plan prevents us from bringing a lake-based system to this area. We are dependent upon that aquifer and that water supply."

Flint showed diagrams of the two-year travel time taken by water before reaching Carlisle wells.

"The Clean Water Act is supposed to protect wellhead protection areas," he said. "An expert committee commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment in charge of creating a threat-assessment framework recommended that no new quarries should be allowed within a five-year time of travel between well protection zones because of the risk of transporting those contaminants from quarries to those wells," he said.

"Look at the diagram one more time. That's a two-year time of travel, not five."

Flint said 12.7-million-litres-per-day scale of the PTTW over more than 20 days could amount to a maximum of 254 million litres being pumped.

"The application requests to test an unproven groundwater recirculation system," he said. "There's no reason why our community should be forced to act as test subjects for this experiment."

McCarthy said the crowd of more than 350 mostly Flamborough residents will triple in size as neighbouring municipalities learn more about the water implications.

"Every document that comes out with new mapping clearly puts the issues of water in the Halton area," she said.