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McCarthy says St Marys' site visit confirms contamination

BY DON REDMOND

An April 24 site inspection with Ministry of the Environment officials present confirms that there is still contamination at the St. Mary's site, according to Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy.

McCarthy made the allegations at an April 16 public meeting at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Elementary School - a meeting attended by St. Mary's vice-president John Moroz and over 300 members of the community.

While Moroz acknowledged the prior contamination and subsequent clean-up order was issued by the MOE back in 1998, he told the audience he believed the property presently held a clean bill of health.

The subsequent site inspection of the 150-hectare property located at the northeast corner of 10th Concession East and Milborough Townline with Moroz, McCarthy, three MOE officials and two property neighbours told a different tale, said the Flamborough Councillor.

"Shingles in an area the size of approximately two football fields were found, along with three standard 50-gallon drums and copper wire sticking out of the ground at various locations," McCarthy told the Compass. "There were areas that had been previously marked out with stakes and other locations that the nearby homeowners believe have materials buried beneath (but) the nature of those materials is unknown."

McCarthy noted the two area residents who joined the site inspection were long-time neighbours of the property - one having lived there for 23 years, the other for nearly 40 years.

According to a 2004 planning report done by David Lowndes, the property owner who first applied for the quarry and subsequently sold out his interests to St. Marys in 2006, "metal recycling occurred" on the St. Marys' site during the 1990s. As well, "evidence of a small gravel pit was disclosed in the south-east sector."

Lowndes' report detailed contact with Brad Farnand, the Abatement Officer for the MOE's Hamilton District Office, in which the MOE official gave him details about previous activities on the site.

In the report, planners noted, "1990s activities evidently consisted of shipping scrap metal and wire to the site for metal recycling. Recycling included burning plastic coated wires to recover copper. This produced an ash residue. Mr. Farnand advised that these activities included the shipping of a substantial number of truckloads of scrap metal to and from the site."

McCarthy said the long-time residents were aware of activity on the site but were in the dark as to the nature of it.

A 1996 Provincial Environmental Services report further noted that a soil analysis of the property referred to "a grayish-brown ash and soil composite... contained high concentrations of metals such as copper, iron, calcium, aluminum, zinc and lead... ash must be removed from the site and disposed of."

In 1998, the MOE issued a clean-up order and Don MacPherson Contracting Limited was hired to clean out the waste. According to MacPherson's clean-up summary and invoice, the company "excavated and scraped up three areas (including) 59.51 tonnes (of) contaminated soil and ash... excavated and loaded (and additional) 111.16 tonnes (of soil and) loaded 8 tonnes of asphalt shingles."

While the MOE was satisfied the clean-up was complete in 1998, McCarthy said the presence of shingles and 50-gallon tanks on the site now would indicate either the work wasn't done to completion 10 years ago or that the dumping had continued after the 1998 clean-up was done.

"Either way, it's unsatisfactory," she said. "The site is still contaminated."