

Water concerns take limelight

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Premier Dalton McGuinty has been asked to “step up to the plate” and protect the water in the Mountsberg/Campbellville area by quashing a quarry plan proposed by St. Marys Cement.

Anti-quarry leader Graham Flint has made the plea before but when he repeated it Wednesday night at a community meeting in Carlisle, an overflow crowd rose to its feet and loudly applauded. The partisan crowd of over 300, composed of residents in northeast Flamborough as well as the nearby Campbellville area, delivered a strong message to St. Marys and Ministry of Environment (MOE) officials. They don't want the quarry in their area and they don't want the aggregate company to get MOE approval for a pump test that they and Hamilton public health officials feel could threaten the quantity and quality of the water that they drink.

While John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of St. Marys CBM, told the crowd that the company “wants to go beyond what is required to answer your water concerns,” residents questioned St. Marys sincerity. Among the first to step up to the microphone to ask questions of officials was a man who abruptly ended his comments by saying, “I don't have any faith in any of you.”

Despite this and similar outbursts, Bill Bardswick, the MOE's regional director, assured residents that they aren't alone in scrutinizing the quarry application for a Permit To Take Water (PTTW). “Don't feel there is no one out there watching for you. That's our job,” he said.

But Bardswick also said his office is in the process of preparing a draft permit for the pump test for a groundwater recirculation system that St. Marys contends will mitigate impacts on the aquifer in the area. “Grounds are limited” for denying the test, he said, adding that the bottom line in the decision process is, “Can this test be done safely?”

Several conditions, including independent third party monitoring, will be attached to the test if it gets approval.

Later in the meeting, when Bardswick revealed that the test won't prove if the recirculation system will work, members of the audience questioned why it should be done. "Why waste our time?" someone shouted from the crowd.

Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy joined Flint in urging the province to take a proactive approach to the quarry application. "Give us a hand here," she said, after advocating that the entire application be reviewed by the Hamilton-Halton Source Water Protection Committee.

A more in-depth article about Wednesday night's meeting will be published in the April 25, 2008 issue of the Flamborough Review.



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