



EDITORIAL: David and Goliath

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At first blush, Tuesday's announcement by MPP Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale) that the provincial government has implemented a zoning freeze on the proposed quarry site in northeast Flamborough – effectively quashing the multi-million dollar St. Marys Cement project – might be cited as an example of David slaying Goliath.

In fact, a victory of such mythical proportions takes a concerted effort on the part of a not inconsiderable army of passionate people.

Certainly, in the initial stages of the process that started some six years ago, the odds were stacked against the small community north of Carlisle opposed to the proposal. Original property owner Lowndes Holdings Corp. sold the land to international conglomerate CBM/St. Marys, further upping the ante for an organized counter-maneuver on the part of concerned residents.

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) early on recognized that any success would depend on their ability to operate if not on the same scale as a multi-national aggregate company, then at least on the same playing field. Matching study for study and expert for expert soon became the weapon of choice in the group's arsenal.

On its own, this tactic may have served merely to stave off the construction vehicles and stall the blasting temporarily. However, David was soon attracting some very big attention.

Tireless work by Ward 15 councillor Margaret McCarthy ensured that Hamilton council, Hamilton Public Health and councils in Milton and Burlington were on board. Local conservation authorities, school boards, farm groups and the Ontario Environment Ministry also voiced concerns about the site choice. Ontario Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller questioned the process that never denied an application for quarry operation. And of course there was McMeekin's tenacious work at the provincial level, which helped clinch the deal.

In the end, the real victors are the local residents – the Davids – who attended all the community meetings, signed petitions, sent letters and pounded Stop the Quarry signs into their lawns.

Tuesday's announcement of the ministerial order to freeze zoning at the site is a direct hit to the giant's tender spot. And while he is not down yet – appeals are sure to follow, and St. Marys is already on the record with its intent to explore legal options – Goliath is perhaps regarding his opponent with a new respect.

Anticipating a renewed advance from St. Marys, FORCE Chair Graham Flint tempered his elation at this week's news, advising residents to hold off popping open the champagne. But all those who contributed to this victory should indeed take at least a moment to savour it – they deserve it.



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