

St. Marys delays registered letters until January

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With the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season close at hand, St. Marys Cement (SMC) has decided to delay its second round of response letters to area residents who have objected to their application for an aggregate licence. The company has plans to establish a quarry in northeast Flamborough.

Registered letters, which were expected to follow within three weeks of the company's first round of responses to objectors, won't be sent until early January, company spokesperson Melanie Horton said last week. She also explained that the first letters, sent out in late October, were mailed only to those who sent in a form letter of objection put together by the anti-quarry group, FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment).

Responses to individual residents and agencies objecting to the application will likely be sent before Christmas, Horton said.

The second round of letters, which must be registered, will trigger a 20-day response from residents, who must restate their objections to the company and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) to ensure that their objections remain active into the next stage of the process.

"We thought it best to give people a bit more time," Horton said, explaining that the content of the registered letters will be the same as the responses to the form letter. The only difference is that the next round will officially trigger the 20-day response deadline.

The delay will also help streamline the process because the company will have first responses in the hands of individual objectors and various agencies before Christmas.

"People in the community associated with FORCE will have more information when they write their 20-day response letters back," Horton said, referring to the responses to individual objectors and agencies, such as the MOE (Ministry of the Environment) and the City of Hamilton. "It's important for the community to know

that we are working with the agencies” to try to resolve concerns, she added.

Graham Flint, chair of FORCE, charged tht the aggregate company’s decision to delay the second round of mailings is in keeping with its inability to meet deadlines, including those set by the company itself.

In a newsletter sent to area residents in September, the company indicated the first mailings would take place by mid-October. Flint said it was five weeks before the letters started to arrive. A chart accompanying the newsletter indicated that the registered mail responses would be received around late November.

In anticipation of receiving the registered response and mindful of the obligation to respond to it within 20 days, FORCE had booked an area school for a public meeting in November but had to cancel when the group learned the registered letters won’t arrive until January.

FORCE questions whether the delay was done to provide the community with more time to respond. A newsletter published by the group states: “While we will never know for sure exactly why St. Marys Cement changed its plan...What does appear to have happened, is that St. Marys appears to be missing its own dates.”



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