

Group wants quarry permit put on hold

Residents say there is no proof that the company's pit will not harm groundwater supplies

BY MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION
Ontario Farmer

Carlisle - A grassroots group fighting a bid by St Marys Cement for a license to install a limestone quarry in a farming area north of Carlisle has taken its case to Natural Resources Minister Donna Cansfield.

The group is pressing the minister not to allow the application to proceed on the grounds that the company has not proved its pit will not affect area wells.

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment - which has about 1,200 supporters in the Carlisle area, including more than 200 farmers - has sent a letter to Cansfield arguing that the ministry should not proceed with the application until the company has demonstrated conclusively from testing that a deep pit can be kept dry without affecting area well water.

Last autumn the Ministry of the Environment rejected first-

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— Graham Flint

phase tests conducted by a consultant for St Marys, on the grounds that the results were not reliable due to rainy weather at the time.

The ministry ordered a retest, but the company refused. "The company does not believe that any further data will be gained by repeating Phase 1 of the pumping test," St Marys said in a letter dated Jan. 22.

FORCE contests the change in the company's approach and wants Cansfield to halt the application until test results are provided.

"How can they possibly make any decisions on approval when they don't know the answer to a question that is that important?" FORCE chairman Graham Flint

said in an interview.

"We are asking that this review by the ministry be comprehensive and not merely and not merely an inventory checklist to ensure the presence of requisite documents," Flint wrote in the letter to Cansfield. "We expect a comprehensive review for compliance and completeness, especially in light of St Marys' refusal to redo pumping tests because of unacceptable results."

Flint also noted that MNR has a responsibility to demand a test because one was already done and rejected by the MOE.

St Marys has responded that it is proceeding in compliance with an established process. The company says MNR can approve the license application without the pump test results, and MOE will decide whether the quarry can operate safely before issuing a water-taking permit, and, if necessary, order a test.

Flint said the group is concerned that time is growing short. The Ministry of Resources has 20 days from the filing of the application on Jan. 22 to determine if it is complete.

St Marys has acquired and assembled the land of two disused farms on 11th Concession in northeast Flamborough near Milborough Line, where it hopes to quarry high-quality limestone for its products.

The proposed site is close to the boundaries of Hamilton (which includes Flamborough) and the municipalities of Burlington and Milton in Halton Region. It is also in the middle of an agricultural area that includes equestrian breeding stables, livestock operations, greenhouses and some cash cropping.

The water issue is emerging as a key one for farmers and rural residents who are concerned that a deep quarry will affect their well water.

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Residents in the village just to the south worry that the quarry will adversely impact the aquifer that supplies their municipal water.

The company has also effectively stood the agreed-upon process on its head by filing the license application before a special review team with representatives from affected municipalities has finished studying the proposal.

St Marys officials say the company is behaving in a socially responsible manner and is not trying to rush through the application. They insist that area residents were told a year ago the license application was coming.