

Citizens gear up to meet Goliath in quarry battle

By Daniel Nolan
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One of Canada's biggest cement and building materials companies has taken on the task of developing a controversial limestone quarry north of Carlisle.

The St. Marys Cement Group has bought Lowndes Holding Corp., which aimed to establish the huge quarry at Milborough Line and 11th Concession and had run into fierce opposition from a community group and Councillor Margaret McCarthy.

Richard Olsen, president of St. Marys CBM (Canada Building Materials), which will oversee the quarry project, said it closed a deal to buy Lowndes from company president David Lowndes June 15. Olsen would not disclose the price, but said Lowndes' association with the proposal has ended.

Olsen said St. Marys bought Lowndes because of the quarry project and also because it believes the aggregate it will produce is needed by Ontario. The firm is aware of opposition from FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) and the Ward 15 councillor, but he believed it can resolve concerns and build a positive relationship with the community.

"We're a good neighbour and we want to do the right thing," Olsen said. "If we didn't feel confident, we wouldn't be here."

But McCarthy and FORCE chair Graham Flint warn St. Marys it will not win over the community to the project.

"I see this as going to the major leagues from the minors," said McCarthy, referring to the financial heft St. Marys brings to the battle which could take five years before a decision is made.

"The first batter is out. The good news is we struck one out. The bad news is we have a tougher and more formidable opponent, but the situation has not changed. I think this makes us more resolved."

St. Marys would like to hold an open house on the quarry proposal, but McCarthy wants a public meeting in August.

Flint said concerns over water supply, loss of wetlands, quarry trucks travelling on country roads, noise, dust and vibrations won't go away no matter who is behind the proposal.

"I don't anticipate that occurring," said Flint, when told Olsen believes St. Marys can resolve residents' concerns. "It doesn't matter who is proposing to do a quarry here, those same issues remain."

Olsen said Lowndes first approached St. Marys about getting involved in the quarry in its initial stage. In 2004, Lowndes filed land use planning applications with the City of Hamilton. The proposal entails removing 60 million tons of limestone from 68 hectares on a 154-hectare site on the border of Flamborough and Milton. The quarry could last 60 years.

Flint agreed the opposition landscape has altered significantly for FORCE, but said his group counts 400 donors who have raised \$250,000 to wage war against the quarry proposal.

"We're doing this for real," Flint said. "This is not kitchen-table opposition. We'll meet them move by move, argument by argument."