

Objecting to St. Marys' numbers

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Re: St. Marys set to respond to rejection letters, Review, Sept. 18

Thank you for the ongoing commitment of your staff to reporting the battle that our communities are having with the proposal from St. Marys Cement to develop an industrial open pit mining operation on the 11th Concession in Flamborough.

The most recent article quotes a representative from St. Marys Cement who deconstructed the numbers of objections received by identifying that the 1,185 received represented 617 addresses.

Furthermore, she attempted to diminish the power of the objections by noting that 92 per cent of the objections came as form letters.

In this country, where each citizen is entitled to one vote, and where voting age members at one address may have different political leanings, 1,185 votes coming from 617 households is 1,185 votes, not 617. That's the nature of a democracy. Each vote (or each objection) counts as one vote (or one objection) – period. Shame on St. Mary's Cement for trying to suggest otherwise.

The fact that 92 per cent of the objections came as form letters is a testament to the bafflement that most citizens feel as they try to sort their way through a provincial process that is convoluted, and weighted in favor of developers. Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) has invested thousands of volunteer hours over the past five-and-a-half years, tearing apart official processes and documents so that all citizens can have a better understanding of how to fight a noxious proposal.

If each individual were to try and object to this proposal, St. Marys Cement would have been successful long ago. By working together and pooling our scarce resources (time, expertise, money), our communities

have succeeded in stopping a quarry from getting started...so far.

It was also noted in the article that, beyond the 1,185 citizens who registered objections, 15 agencies (governmental and NGOs) also formally registered objections. Unlike our citizen form letters, prepared by volunteers at FORCE, these agencies have paid technical staff and experts who know the issues and processes inside out. Each of their 15 letters would have been unique.

Unfortunately, the St. Marys Cement spokesperson did not deconstruct this grouping of agencies. Had that been done, the depth and breadth of their objections may have been eye-popping.

Bonnie Lendrum
Carlisle

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