



St. Marys responds to objection letters

Cool reception from citizens' group

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Members of a grassroots citizens' group opposed to a quarry proposal in northeast Flamborough are giving a cool reception to objection response letters from St. Marys Cement (SMC).

Graham Flint, chair of the group called FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), said Tuesday that the letters fail to address residents' concerns and provide only "empty promises and assurances" about what the aggregate company will do to lessen the impact of the proposal on neighbouring residents.

"They have given us no reasons to withdraw our objections," he said. "Our objections are and remain broad and substantive."

Melanie Horton, director of land and resources for SMC, said "a fair bit of thought" went into her six-page response to a resident who sent a template or form letter crafted by FORCE objecting to the company's application for an aggregate licence. "A lot of the answers (to concerns) are in studies and reports that have been done," she said, adding that full copies of those reports are available online at www.flamboroughquarry.ca.

Response letters from SMC began to arrive last week in the mailboxes of residents near the proposed quarry site at the corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line.

The letters are being sent three weeks before registered letters containing St. Marys' official response go out to residents, agencies and municipalities that submitted objections to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) after the company applied for an aggregate licence earlier this year.

The registered letters will set in motion a 20-day response from objectors, who will need to indicate to the company how it can resolve their concerns if the company letter has failed to do so. According to the process under the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA), the objectors must also reaffirm their objections to the MNR and SMC within the 20-day deadline or it will be deemed they no longer object to the proposal.

SMC will then have the option to re-respond. If it cannot resolve the objections by the spring of 2011, it can submit a package to the MNR outlining its efforts and asking for a decision. The MNR can grant or deny the licence or refer the application to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Flint said the company's response letter could best be described as "a restatement of intent to do future work and an inaccurate interpretation of work done so far," alluding to the absence of any mention in the letter to the Ministry of Environment's (MOE's) rejection of data collected by SMC during pump tests at the quarry site last summer, or the ministry's request that the company repeat the tests.

Flint was also critical of the company's move to trigger the 20-day consultation period, also known as the official "Notification of Objectors," so soon after the application for an aggregate licence was filed.

"I don't feel we're rushing or responding too quickly," Horton said. In the past, opponents to the quarry have accused the company of "dragging their feet," she explained. "We've heard from the community that we're moving too slowly and they would like to have closure, one way or another." The quarry proposal has been on the books for five years.

In her letter, Horton notes that detailed reports have been done in support of the licence application and recommendations in technical reports have been included in site plans to minimize any adverse impacts on the environment such as ground and surface water, natural environment features, noise and vibration.

Addressing concerns, such as impacts on groundwater, is an ongoing process that will continue through the review of the application, Horton explained, noting that the deadline to address issues raised by residents and agencies isn't until the spring of 2011.

Horton said the company plans to do additional pump testing and will be applying for a Permit To Take Water (PTTW). It also plans to hold its final public meeting on a proposed haul route next spring.

A press release issued by FORCE this week stressed that residents who receive the registered letter from

SMC must respond to it to confirm that their objections remain. FORCE will assist in preparing a new letter of objection in response to the registered letters from the company and will help coordinate delivery of the objection letters to SMC and the MNR.

The MNR has agreed to a request from FORCE to put documents from multiple objectors into one mailing rather than send out individual registered replies at a cost of about \$8 each.

Each letter must be signed and listed in a cover letter accompanying the mailing.

About 1,200 letters of objection were filed against the licence application.



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