



St. Marys set to respond to objection letters

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Residents in northeast Flamborough will soon be receiving a community newsletter from St. Marys Cement (SMC) alerting them to the aggregate company's next steps in support of its application for an aggregate licence for the proposed Flamborough Quarry.

But even before the newsletter arrived in the mail, Graham Flint, the chair of the citizen's anti-quarry group FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), was criticizing the company for "accelerating the process" without first meaningfully addressing the community's concerns about groundwater and transportation impacts of the proposal.

Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy has also stepped into the fray, charging that SMC is doing its best to take the whole issue "out of public domain and put it in the hands of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB)" rather than see it become an issue in the next municipal election.

SMC spokesperson Melanie Horton denies that the company is moving ahead too quickly. "I don't see that we're accelerating it," she said, adding "where we can, we're trying to build in more time."

To substantiate that, she points to the timetable being distributed through the community newsletter that shows letters will be sent to objectors early in October, a full three weeks before registered letters bearing St. Marys' official response.

The registered letters, to be sent in late October or early November, 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 fails to do so. According to the process under the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA), objectors must also reaffirm their objections to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and SMC within the 20-day period or it will be deemed that they no longer object to the proposal.

SMC will then have the option to re-respond to the objections, after which it can submit a package to the MNR outlining the company's efforts to resolve the objections. The licence application then rests with the MNR, which has the power to grant or deny a licence or refer the application to the OMB.

Since the start of the process five years ago, opponents to the quarry have predicted that the matter will eventually go to the OMB. Given the timetable outlined by SMC in its newsletter, Flint said it's conceivable that the application could be at the OMB in six months or less.

Horton doesn't agree. Before it goes to the Board, the City of Hamilton will need to make a decision on the company's application for a rezoning and Official Plan Amendment (OPA) of the proposed quarry site near 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line, she said.

Also, it is not likely to go forward before the traffic study for the proposal is complete, she noted. "There's a long road ahead of us before the Board stage."

About a month ago, representatives of SMC, the MNR and FORCE met to cross-reference their information and compile a complete list of objectors. According to Horton, about 1,185 letters of objection were received, including 15 agency letters. These represent about 617 addresses as there were multiple submissions from

some families.

Of these, close to 1,074 (92 per cent) were form letters supplied by FORCE or close variations of the template letter. About 690 of the letters were submitted directly by the anti-quarry group in a bulk submission from Flint, Horton said.

The company has begun the process of responding to written objections, including those contained in the form letters. SMC will provide “a standard response” to all those who sent the form letter and will send FORCE an electronic copy of the response; other objectors will receive letters responding to their individual concerns.

While Flint continues to argue that “the spirit and intent of the review process appears violated” by the aggregate company’s method of moving forward with the process before addressing key issues, such as hydrogeology, Horton counters that the company intends to do additional pump testing. But she couldn’t say when or in what format. “By the end of October, I expect to have a better answer on that.”

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