



## FORCE renews for next stage of quarry battle

By Dianne Cornish

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Victoria Day weekend last year sent shockwaves through rural subdivisions in Flamborough's northeast corner. That's when residents of the area learned that an out-of-town developer, who had been buying up properties along 11 Concession Road East near Milborough Line, was proposing to build a large quarry in their neighborhood.

The news sparked the formation of a citizens' group named FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), which vowed to fight the quarry proposed by Lowndes Holdings Corp. to the finish. Formed last June, the group remains a force to be reckoned with, one that is recognized as being professional and well-organized as well as dogged in its determination to win its case.

Graham Flint, a resident of one of the rural subdivisions near the proposed quarry site, felt so strongly about the cause that he left his job with Microsoft Canada last summer to devote his full-time energies toward opposing the quarry. The chair of FORCE remains as committed now as he was then.

Last Victoria Day weekend, a resident of 11 Concession Road East dropped a notice into the mailboxes of area residents. Flint still recalls the range of emotions he felt when he read the notice, which said that big drilling rigs seen on the nearby property heralded a proposal for a quarry.

Flint and his wife, Silke, had just moved into their new home in the Timber Run subdivision five months earlier. "I had a huge emotional response to the news," Flint recalled last week. "It took many forms," he added. He went through denial, anger and mistrust.

By the time he attended an information meeting, arranged by Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy early last June, he was ready to announce where his emotions had lead him. He told quarry proponent David Lowndes before a capacity crowd at the Carlisle Community Centre that opposition to the quarry had grown dramatically in just a few weeks and residents were ready to take action. Anger, he said, had turned to resolve and then into action.

Six days later at a residents' meeting in Lawson Park, which sits kitty-corner to the quarry site, FORCE was born.

To mark the first anniversary of the group, FORCE will hold a meeting Monday, May 30, from 7 to 9 p.m., in the recreation hall of Lawson Park. An annual report, prepared by volunteers of the group, will be presented.

Flint said the report outlines the history of FORCE and the stages that the Lowndes' application for rezoning has already gone through. "We'll be telling residents what happens next," he said. Right now, the City of Hamilton is waiting for Lowndes to provide about \$200,000 to pay for an independent peer review of various studies supporting his application. After the review is completed, meetings will be held to gain public input, but these aren't expected until late this year or early in 2006.

The upcoming anniversary meeting will also provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions and "interact with the (FORCE) committee," Flint said. In addition, residents will be asked to come forward with another financial commitment.

Last year, \$154,000 was raised through donations and fund-raising to help cover the cost of legal and technical expertise required to fight the quarry proposal. A similar commitment will be needed this time around, Flint said.

“We continue to feel that the benchmark we set last year is a realistic one,” the FORCE chair said, referring to a commitment of \$500 from each of the households affected by the quarry plan.

“About 200 households are directly impacted by the proposal,” he said.

While some past donors have shown their commitment by donating \$100 on five different occasions throughout the year, others have chosen to make out 10 postdated cheques of \$50 each staggered over the year, Flint said.

“We like to compare it (the \$500 donation) to the \$2 cup of coffee many of us buy each day,” he said. “It’s really not asking a lot when it comes to preserving our way of life, our property values and the safety of our children.”