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Quarry haul routes top residents' concerns

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Published on Aug 25, 2006

"It's terrifying."

Carlisle resident Greg Kochuk couldn't think of any other words to describe how he felt when he looked at a map of potential haul routes for the proposed St. Mary's Flamborough Quarry on 11th Concession Road East near the Milburough Line.

The map, which drew a lot of attention and spirited reactions from neighbouring residents, was displayed at a community open house hosted last Thursday night by St. Mary's Cement Group. Kochuk, whose children attend school on the 10th Concession and Centre Road, was almost speechless when he saw that Centre Road was a proposed haul route for trucks carrying materials from the quarry. Representatives for Lowndes Holdings Corporation, the former owners of the site, had consistently reassured area residents that they had no plans to use Centre Road as a haul route.

Kochuk attended the open house to voice concerns about the possible negative impacts that the aggregate operation would have on the aquifer that feeds local private wells and the communal well system in Carlisle. When he saw the map, the haul route became just as big a concern.

St. Mary's officials, including company president Richard Olsen and vice-president and general manager of aggregates, John Moroz, were peppered with questions during the session. Moroz tried to allay fears by stressing that the three routes on the map are "proposed" at this stage and have yet to undergo public meetings to determine whether they will, in fact, be used.

"There'll be a public process to determine that," he said.

About 55 residents attended the first of three open houses that are being held on consecutive Thursdays between 4 and 8 p.m. at the site office on 515 11th Concession Road East.

One resident, who saw 12th Concession Road East identified as a haul route, reacted with shock.

"You're kidding me," Mark Simone said to Moroz before revealing that he lives just off the 12th Concession in Stonebrook Estates, a 31-home subdivision that was supposed to grow to more than twice that size but is now in limbo because of the uncertain marketability of new homes in the area since the quarry application was filed.

Simone told the Review that Olsen told him that his property value wouldn't be affected if the quarry locates in the area. When he asked Moroz the same question, he was told there wouldn't be "a significant property devaluation."

Timber Run subdivision resident Graham Flint, who witnessed the exchange between Simone and Olsen, said the company president's response "flies in the face of common sense." Flint, who also heads up FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), a grassroots citizens' group that opposes the quarry, expressed disappointment that "an organization of their (St. Mary's) scale and depth should lack specifics" when asked direct questions by area residents.

"Why try to win over this community with platitudes and generalities?" he asked, again expressing

disappointment because company officials didn't share details about the project with guests at the open house.

Responding to Flint's comments, Moroz said, "It's a long public process," and "it would be improper for us to share details before a conclusion state is reached." He used the haul routes as an example, noting that drawing conclusions on where the routes will be before engaging in public meetings on the issue would be premature. The meetings are expected to be held this fall. Moroz added that he is pleased with the turnout at last week's meeting.

"I think we accomplished our objective to make ourselves available to the community and open up dialogue," he said, noting that there will be further opportunities for sharing information in the future. "Communication with the community isn't over yet."

Flint, however, feels that detailed information should be available now because the quarry application is almost two years old.

"Their transportation stuff is almost laughable," he said, noting that the proposal to use the 12th Concession as a haul route has already been "on and off the table" during discussions with the previous owners. Wetlands in the area limit development, including the expansion or upgrading of existing roads.

Moroz told Kilbride resident Diana McCabe that the haul routes will likely be upgraded to handle the expected truck traffic. She asked for assurances that her taxes won't go up to build or maintain the haul routes; Moroz responded that the financing and costs associated with the ongoing maintenance of the haul routes will be negotiated by the company and the municipality.

At times the discussion grew heated. Bob Pearce, of Stonebury Place, angrily shouted that the proposed quarry will ruin his rural lifestyle. "I built a paradise and you guys are wrecking it. You don't have the right to take my water...to take my environment," he said.

Roman Sarachman, also a resident of Stonebury Place, charged that St. Mary's Cement was conducting its communications campaign in an inappropriate way by not including neighbouring residents directly affected by the quarry in the company's door-to-door canvass over a recent period of three to four weeks. Top level company officials visited homes primarily in the Carlisle area instead.

Olsen said the company's communication process is still very young.

"We haven't had a chance to contact everyone but we will," he pledged.

The president of the company, which bought the quarry site from Lowndes in mid-June, also pointed to a map at the open house and told Sarachman that he had just talked to people living near the site. Additional opportunities will be given at the upcoming open houses and other public events hosted by St. Mary's.



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