



Aggregate industry to take on province

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The aggregate industry is preparing to square off with the Ontario government over last week's decision by Jim Bradley, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), to freeze zoning on the proposed Flamborough Quarry site. The move effectively kills a proposal by St. Marys Cement (SMC) to establish a quarry at 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line.

While SMC has 30 days to appeal the decision to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), the company announced last week it is examining "legal options" in a bid to overturn the decision. As of Tuesday this week, St. Marys hasn't determined what option to pursue, said company spokesman John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of CBM Aggregates.

"As for ultimate approval (being sought from the province), we feel that we were moving through the designated process and...that with continued work, we could demonstrate all environmental features as well as the hydrogeological features could be preserved and protected."

But the Ontario government, after hearing groundwater concerns from the City of Hamilton, Town of Milton, City of Burlington, Halton Region, the Hamilton and Halton Medical Officers of Health, and thousands of citizens both near and distant from the quarry site, decided to terminate the proposal.

"It was a prudent decision based on widely-held opinion that this is not the right place for this kind of development," said MPP Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale). He added that water conservation wasn't the only issue figuring into the government's decision. "There were other solid environmental issues as well," he said, alluding to wetlands and environmentally significant areas on the quarry lands.

Moroz said extracting aggregate close-to-market remains "the most environmentally responsible" solution to Ontario's demand for aggregate. "Close-to-market aggregates are critical to minimize green house gas generation," he stressed. If the aggregates aren't available close to markets, the material has to come from twice the distance, requiring twice as many trucks on the road, he said.

"This would negate the effectiveness of many of the green house gas initiatives that the people of this province are implementing."

The SMC spokesman called the government's decision, "a grave error." He was backed up last week by the chair of the Ontario Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (OSSGA), Terry Waites, who charged that the decision undermines "the credibility of Ontario's land use approvals process."

Noting that aggregate extraction proposals undergo rigorous review, Waite said, "It is unclear to us why the Minister felt the need to interfere with a process that considers, in detail, the planning, environmental and social issues surrounding each application."

"Part of that process includes government ability to intervene when it thinks something is inappropriate," McMeekin countered. "I'm not anti-quarry; I'm anti-quarry for that quarry in that place."

Given the province's focus on being "open for business," the OSSGA contends Minister Bradley's actions are counter-intuitive to the progress of continual improvement and cooperation between the aggregate industry and various stakeholders. In a press release, the association said the government "has sent a clear message that investing in Ontario is uncertain at best."

Taking exception to the comment, McMeekin responded, "We want good investment, to benefit our communities." He characterized the association's comment as "a predictable response from an industry that has a self-interest."

The OSSGA is a non-profit industry association representing 103 producers of sand, gravel, and crushed stone in Ontario, along with 158 suppliers of aggregate industry products and services.

Last week at a meeting of Hamilton city council, Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy, an ardent quarry opponent, declared victory in the fight to quash the quarry. "(The Ontario) Cabinet agreed to this provincial order (to freeze the zoning) so there is no opportunity for appeal," she said.

McMeekin told the Review last week that SMC can launch an appeal within 30 days, after which the government has 30 days to declare a provincial interest which would require adjudication by the Ontario Cabinet. "It was a ministerial decision but reflects the position of the government," he said.

McCarthy thanked Hamilton city council and other local municipal governments for supporting motions against the quarry. She also thanked city staff, Halton Conservation and environmental and community groups for their support. She concluded her emotion-charged address by crediting area residents for battling through the quarry application process for seven years. "They're the ones who won and the ones I'm most happy for."



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