

## FORCE intent on meeting Feb. 1 deadline

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“Let’s make sure the 1,200 objections stand.” That was the parting message from Graham Flint to just over 200 guests who attended a community meeting in Carlisle last Wednesday.

Hosted by Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE), a citizens’ group fighting a proposed quarry for northeast Flamborough, the meeting was called to remind area residents to re-state their objections to the Flamborough quarry plan by Feb. 1. By formally re-stating their objections to the plan to St. Marys Cement (SMC) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), residents not only reinforce their concerns about the proposal but also affirm their opposition to the aggregate licence application filed last year by SMC.

Flint, who chairs FORCE, told residents that the group is doing all it can to make the process easier by collecting their registered responses and ensuring that they are bulk delivered by the deadline date outlined by the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA). As of Monday, about 700 registered letters had been collected by FORCE, with more expected to come in over the remainder of the week.

The registered letters are standard responses, or template letters, prepared by the group for residents who share the group’s concerns about the quarry’s effects on groundwater, transportation and the environment. Another 60 to 100 custom letters were also filed by other residents, who chose to write their own objection letters. They, too, will fall under a 20-day response deadline once they are answered by the aggregate company with a registered letter.

St. Marys spokesperson Melanie Horton confirmed Tuesday that the company has responded by registered mail to all objectors. The 20-day response period will be later for those who wrote their own letters, but should fall within a month to six weeks, she said.

Flint encouraged all objectors to re-state their objections by Feb. 1 to ensure that they continue to stand

throughout the next stage of the application process. All letters must contain the word “object” and must outline the reasons for objection, he stressed.

By sending their letters through FORCE, an accurate tally of all responses can be kept, he said.

Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy, who has worked shoulder to shoulder with the group since it was formed to fight the proposal six years ago, commended residents for remaining engaged throughout the process. “It’s easy to get fatigued with such a lengthy process,” she told the crowd.

She noted that the proponents of another quarry project in the Shelburne area have used arguments to support their application that are the mirror image of concerns raised by Flamborough and Milton area residents about the proposed Flamborough quarry. In promoting their cause, the proponents have pointed out that the Shelburne area quarry is not in the greenbelt, poses no risk to wildlife and wetlands, and has no source water issues. “Everything they’ve used is from us,” she said, adding that she’s certain the fight against the Flamborough quarry can be won.

“If there is any objectivity at the OMB (Ontario Municipal Board), we have it beat,” she said.

The proposal for the quarry, which would be located near the corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line, is expected to eventually be referred by the MNR to the OMB for a decision, perhaps as early as next year.

One meeting participant wanted to know why the MNR can’t simply reject the application rather than refer the matter to the OMB. Flint replied that the referral appears to be the ministry’s way of “absolving themselves” of the responsibility of making a decision.

In the past, the ministry has generally approved quarry applications, he said. Those that are controversial are referred to the OMB or to the provincial board and the Environmental Tribunal.

Flint reminded the crowd that there are still many hurdles for the proposal to clear, such as getting an aggregate licence and approval from the City of Hamilton for rezoning the quarry property.

“There are lots of places, as a community, (where) we can fight,” he said.



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