



Province quashes quarry plan

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As the Ontario government moved Tuesday to freeze the zoning on a 154-acre parcel of land in northeast Flamborough prohibiting St. Marys Cement (SMC) from using the lands for a quarry, the aggregate company responded swiftly saying it will examine legal options in a bid to overturn the government's decision.

MPP Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale) announced the landmark decision outside his constituency office in Waterdown while a small crowd of 20 people looked on. There were hugs, kisses, handshakes and even tears as area residents reacted to the news.

But the announcement wasn't welcomed in all quarters. A top official at SMC told the Review early Tuesday afternoon that the company plans to try to have the government's decision reversed. John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of CBM Aggregates, said SMC learned of the government's action Tuesday morning.

"We are surprised and disappointed, and believe the government has made a grave error," he said. SMC's application for a quarry licence was making its way through provincially and municipally mandated processes and "we believe, on its merits, it had a high chance of being ultimately approved," he stated.

Since 2006, the aggregate company has invested well over \$20 million in efforts to demonstrate to regulators that "the Flamborough Quarry would be environmentally sound and a net benefit to the community and the province," he noted. "Given the strong economic and social potential" of the quarry, he said the company has no choice but to look into its legal options.

In his announcement, McMeekin cited concerns about the proposed quarry's potential impact on groundwater as the major reason for the government's action. But he also credited Hamilton City Council, Halton Regional Council, and the medical officers of health from both municipalities for taking an active role by appealing to the government to stop the quarry, largely because of health concerns related to possible groundwater impacts. Milton Town Council also approved a motion calling on the province to deny SMC's aggregate licence application.

McMeekin commended FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) for their strong community-based opposition to the proposal and Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy for her "passionate voice" against the quarry, proposed for lands near the Hamilton/Milton border near 11th Concession East and Milborough Line.

McCarthy and FORCE chair Graham Flint were among onlookers at McMeekin's media conference. Hamilton mayor Fred Eisenberger, who is out of the country, was represented by rural Flamborough councillor and deputy mayor Robert Pasuta.

Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Jim Bradley issued the Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) to freeze the zoning of the subject lands as agricultural and Conservation Management in perpetuity. Uses of the land will be restricted to those that comply with its current zoning.



BIG ANNOUNCEMENT: MPP Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale) announces the Ontario government's decision to freeze the zoning on a 154-acre parcel of land in northeast Flamborough prohibiting St. Marys Cement from using the lands for a quarry. Photo by Dianne Cornish • Review

McMeekin told news media that MZO's are relatively rare and he said he could recall only four previous occasions when the Liberal government chose to issue them, including one to protect the Oak Ridges Moraine from urban sprawl. He said information about the decision had been posted on the government's Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) website and St. Marys has 30 days to appeal the decision. The province then has 30 days to declare a provincial interest with the final adjudication to be made by the Ontario Cabinet.

"Today is a watershed day for our community," McMeekin said. He later told the Review that the concerted community effort figured prominently in the government's decision, as did the Greenbelt Act and the Clean Water Act. "It's about protecting our community and environment for our children," he said.

While elated with the news, FORCE's Flint, still unsure about what action SMC will take, cautioned, "Let's not pop the cork on this yet." However, he allowed that the government's action makes the prospect of a quarry locating on the Flamborough property "very slight."

Flint credited community residents and area municipalities, including Hamilton, Halton, Milton and Burlington, for keeping opposition to the quarry in the limelight and making their concerns known to the provincial government. He thanked the government for listening, McMeekin for his "loyal and tenacious" support and McCarthy for her "never-ending passion" in opposing the quarry and bringing residents's concerns to Hamilton's city council.

Fighting to keep her composure and alluding to her impending retirement from municipal politics, McCarthy said, "It's nice to come this far and have it end like this before I leave." A tireless opponent to the quarry, she said many people "worked shoulder to shoulder" with her to defeat the proposal.

Pasuta lauded the province for protecting the environmentally significant lands on the quarry site and the many residents who worked with FORCE and their elected officials to fight the proposal.

In a question period at the close of the media conference, Flamborough resident Karen Gourlay asked, "Is it safe to take down our signs?" She was referring to the "Stop the Quarry" signs that dot many lawns in northeast Flamborough and Campbellville.

Flint replied that while "a little celebrating" is in order, it would be prudent to wait and see how St. Marys Cement responds to the government's decision. McMeekin pledged to be vigilant as the issue goes forward.



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