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## Quarry plans quashed

Dianne Cornish

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In an unprecedented move, 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 major quarry development.

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

McMeekin cited concerns about the proposal's potential impact on groundwater as the major reasons for the government's action. But he also commended 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 also singled out FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) for its strong community-based opposition to the proposal and Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy for her "passionate voice" against the quarry since the proposal surfaced in the spring of 2004.

The quarry was proposed for lands near the Hamilton/Milton border near 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line.

McCarthy and FORCE chair Graham Flint were among onlookers at the announcement. 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 a Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) to freeze the zoning of the subject lands as agricultural and Conservation Management. Use of the land will be restricted to its current uses or ones that comply with its current zoning.

McMeekin told news media that MZOs are relatively rare and 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.

Asked if he knew if SMC officials had responded to the government decision, McMeekin said he hadn't heard from the aggregate company. 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 being made by the Ontario Cabinet.

"Today is a watershed day for our community and a fitting tribute to the enormous community-based leadership that articulated the case against the proposed St. Mary's Quarry so very well," McMeekin said.

Officials from SMC were unavailable for comment before press deadline.



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