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## 'The right thing:' Go away, SMC

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The article by John Moroz of St. Marys Cement (SMC) in The Spectator of April 20 (Flamborough Quarry "the right thing") reads as a one-sided criticism of the Ontario government's minister's zoning order, which after six years has called time on the Flamborough quarry proposal.

His words, calling it "a grave error," reveal a chasm of thinking between the government, local councils and residents and an industry with a history of entitlement that would be the envy of a Wall Street banker.

Moroz claims to be surprised by the "unprecedented" ending of the "standard process." This is not surprising because up until now this "process" has always favoured the quarry applicant. The only way that an application has not passed through the Ministry of Natural Resources has been when an applicant himself withdraws the application. (Source: Mariel Jensen of Gravel Watch Ontario who studied 235 applications made from 2001 to 2008.)

Moroz states their application was making its way diligently through the rigorous mandated processes. But SMC aborted its testing under their Permit To Take Water and launched into the process under the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) before completing what they were required, and had promised, to do. Then, in the first six months of the ARA process, SMC required the community to reconfirm its objections when no work had been done to alter the original situation.

For residents in the Carlisle, Freulton, Campbellville, Mountsberg and Milton areas, who would have been most affected by the building of the fourth-largest quarry in Canada, the last six years have been years of worry and concern that lives and health were going to be put at risk.

Moroz correctly states there is a need for aggregate, but he neglects to note this would have been a supremely unsuitable location. Many residential areas surround the proposed site, which sits above the main water course serving most of the Carlisle and surrounding areas. A 13-storey-deep hole blasted into fractured limestone would have had a devastating impact on the water availability and safety, and could have made the tragedy at Walkerton pale in comparison. A resident on the Eleventh Concession, further down the adjacent aquifer, had already experienced severely polluted water on several occasions in February 2008, when SMC were drilling a small test well almost a mile away.

Moroz states he is confident "concerns about the potential impacts a quarry may have on groundwater could be resolved through the regulatory process." He refers to their proposed recirculation system that has never been used anywhere in the world, whereby they would pump groundwater from an open ditch back into the aquifer from a distance. It appears as though SMC desired a licence to run an experiment in quarrying fractured limestone, with the surrounding communities being used as guinea pigs.

Moroz also expounds the point that "extracting aggregate close-to-market remains the most environmentally responsible solution." This, however only holds true if the location of a quarry does not endanger fragile wetlands, a major water source for thousands of residents, and the many travellers on these winding rural roads including the school buses for many local schools.

A projected number for transportation was 1,400 truck trips a day, which would have been one truck passing every 19 seconds, including the two-way traffic.

Putting a quarry of this size in this location, however close to the market it may be, could be likened to a pork processing and rendering plant being proposed for Jackson Square because it would be closer to the Hamilton Farmers' Market!

A positive aspect of the fight to Stop the Quarry was our communities for miles around were united in their opposition to the SMC proposal.

Thousands of hours of work were spent by Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) members and other residents. In a rather David-and-Goliath situation, local residents had to foot the bill to fight a multibillion-dollar company.

Residents found it hard to believe that their government would not recognize the unsuitability of the location, and have experienced relief that their elected representatives have been wise enough to do so. In an unprecedented show of unified support, the councils of Hamilton, Halton, Milton and Burlington voted unanimously to oppose the application. The medical officers of health for Hamilton and Halton also opposed the application, as did the Ministry of the Environment. Councillor Margaret McCarthy and MPP Ted McMeekin were tireless in their efforts to show that yes, sometimes democracy really works for the ordinary people.

Moroz ends his article by saying: "We are committed to doing the right thing."

The right thing now is for SMC to go away, please.

Helen M. Howell lives in Freulton.



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