

Potential flyrock zone on Highway 7 between Acton and Rockwood

By: Vivien Fleisher

The Concerned Resident's Coalition (CRC) caused more than a few heads to turn at the intersection of Highway 7 and Fifth Line Nassagaweya on Monday, only 75 meters from blasting James Dick (JDCL) intends to carry out at the Hidden Quarry site if they win at May's LPAT hearings. JDCL is planning to blast below the water table to extract dolomite limestone. The number of issues triggered by this proposal are legion: drinking water contamination; property damage from vibration; etc., but this time the spotlight was on flyrock, defined as "rock fragments propelled through the air beyond the normal blast zone by explosives detonated to fragment the rock". Using a car with a large rock smashed through the windshield as a prop, the group erected signs along the highway warning drivers and residents of the future risk should this application get approved. The prop it-

self is a re-enactment of real-life examples of flyrock disasters around the globe, which claimed the lives of over 1,000 people worldwide since the start of the 21st century. That doesn't include non-fatalities like damaged property and vehicles that number in the thousands globally. The risk is the result of unpredictable geological factors and human error, and statistically JDCL could have up to 14 incidents each year, some of which could leave the site, or "exclusion zone".

The heart of the issue is that the proposed exclusion zone around the quarry should be a minimum 500 meters, which is a provincial issue. Not only is it far less than that, Highway 7 and several residences are as close as 75 meters to the proposed blast site. To that end, the CRC is encouraging residents to write, call or email Natural Resources and Forestry Minister John Yakabuski to demand flyrock be regulated in Ontario. In Nova Scotia, the Mining Association enfor-

ces an 800-meter exclusion zone when residences are in the vicinity.

A document issued to the media and residents explaining the blasting process, exclusion zones, etc. connects the dots between Walkerton's tainted water crisis and Rockwood's potential for one, since damage to the aquifer could open contamination pathways to drinking water permanently. And while it also explains the potential number of flyrock incidents isn't high, it's the serious damage and fatality when they do occur that makes the proposal unrealistic for the area. The site is too small for even a



500 meter exclusion zone, and even that distance can be breached, with typical rocks the size of baseballs travelling at speeds of up to 600 km per hour. At the event, CRC media contact Linda Sword pointed out that "just two lanes of traffic and a few rows of trees separate this home" from that possibility, rare but

catastrophic.

Estimates for the number of blasts during the site's proposed 17-year lifespan range between 25 and 75,000. Citing Dyno Nobel America's statistic that fly rock occurs every 175 blasts, the CRC calculated the potential for up to 25 flyrock incidents a year, subjecting 19 homes

and businesses within 500 meters of the proposed blast site, and about 9,000 vehicles travelling the highway daily within that zone to "personal injury or worse". There are currently no provincial exclusion-zone minimums. Quarries determine them, but the CRC says residents can change that.

Why nature matters: Earth Hour 2019

Mayor Rick Bonnette, a long-time champion of sustainability initiatives, is encouraging the community to participate in Earth Hour on Saturday, March 30. "I am asking residents and businesses to join me from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. by turning off unnecessary lights and electronics for one hour."

This year, the Earth Hour organization with their hundreds of millions of supporters and global networks is focused on sparking unique conversations on the loss of natural elements and "why nature matters?"

ing in Earth Hour we are showing our commitment to the environment and drawing attention to wildlife loss in Canada and around the world due to climate change."

The Town of Halton Hills will once again take part in Earth Hour marking the 11th year of participation and measuring energy usage. To date, the municipality has saved enough electricity to power approximately 28,146 homes for one hour.

Below are suggestions how residents, educators and business owners can

- Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics.
- Enjoy a candlelit dinner with family and friends.
- Read a book by flashlight or play a game with family.
- Host an Earth Hour party.
- Donate to an organization that focuses on environmental protection.

For Educators:

- Organize a mini-Earth Hour in class the day before Earth Hour.
- Discuss the importance of reducing energy with students, protecting wildlife and what they can do to

video.

For Business Owners:

- Turn off or dim non-essential lighting and electronics, without compromising safety and security.
- Promote Earth Hour to staff and clients.
- Turn down the thermostat and review ways to reduce energy use year-round.
- Show support for environmental groups or partner with them to support positive actions that nurture our environment.

Future Outlook in Rural Wellington - Halton Hills

Thursday March 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Wellington County Museum