

LPAT case # is: PL170688

WITNESS STATEMENT

Tony Russell

13645 5th Line Nassagaweya

My name is Tony Russell and I live at 13645 5th Line Nassagaweya which is approximately 1500m south of the proposed quarry site.

During the various discussions surrounding the Hidden Quarry proposal, we have heard the proponent's position that any local resident should not be concerned about property damage as any damage would be corrected by the quarry owner and that there is no demonstrated negative effect on property values. My personal experience of living near a quarry is inconsistent with such claims and so I would like to share that experience with you today.

Prior to moving to the 5th Line Nassagaweya, my family and I lived on the 3rd Line Acton, south of 22nd sideroad from 1988 to 1999. When we moved into the house, the Acton quarry was an established operation that was bounded on the south side by 22nd sideroad which meant that our house was about 1100m from the quarry. As the quarry was already in operation (actually established in the early 1900s), it would be reasonable to say that any effect on the house value was already built into the price we paid in 1988. The fact that we moved there also demonstrated that we had no pre-existing prejudice towards the quarry.

However, the quarry did expand south of 22nd sideroad a few years after we moved. This expansion brought with it several new challenges but the key ones that I am addressing here are the property damage and consequential property devaluation.

My primary observation was that the blasting shockwaves were very evident at the house. One could feel the whole structure move as the shockwave passed. I vividly recall the first time I personally experienced the blasting shortly after moving in. I was on vacation (and so at home at the regular daily noon hour blasting) and sitting on the garage floor working on my car. For an instant, as the shockwave passed, I felt weightless, almost as though I left the ground! As I mentioned, this blasting was daily at the time, and so my wife and three pre-school children experienced that same shockwave effect every day. My house eventually started to display significant symptoms that I would believe were a direct result of the repeated mechanical shocks. At first they were relatively minor such as cracks in the window frames and some cracks in the drywall. Eventually, the symptoms became more serious. Following the expansion of the quarry south of 22nd sideroad, cracks started to propagate across the concrete floor of the garage and basement. The house then developed a crack through both of the masonry walls on the south wall of the structure (this was the largest section of the structure above ground). This grew to be a ½" crack that extended diagonally both on the interior structural masonry as well as the exterior cosmetic masonry. The two cracks propagated at 90 degrees to each other suggesting that they were not just due to simple subsidence (note that the house had been there for approximately 20 years already so the foundation would reasonably be considered as very stable).

When it came to discussing this damage with the quarry representatives, I was told that there was no proof that the cracks were related to the blasting as I had not had the foresight to have my house monitored with accelerometers and recorders to establish the shock levels due to the blasting. Even if the house had been monitored in such a fashion, there would have to be an engineering analysis to establish the blasting shockwaves were responsible. Given the complex nature of such analyses, it may well have been prohibitively costly to derive a conclusive root cause for the damage. My ultimate conclusion was that I had unfortunately not thought to invest large sums of money in such monitoring prior to the damage and that I was out of luck.

Other aspects of the quarry operations included:

- Inaccessibility to 22nd Sideroad due to the 3rd Line being closed by quarry workers due to the risk of rocks landing on the 3rd Line road during the blasting. This was very inconvenient but obviously a very necessary safety precaution on behalf of the quarry. I would be concerned about a similar situation on the much more significant Highway 7 which is on the border of the Hidden Quarry.
- The congestion caused by trucks lining up for the opening of the quarry in the early morning. These stationary, large vehicles caused safety issues due to road constrictions and visibility issues for other motorists.

Eventually, we decided to move to the 5th Line Nassagaweya in 1998. When we sold our house, we realized an 11% appreciation in the price in nominal dollars. During the time that we lived there, the consumer price index moved up by 35%. In other words, when adjusted for inflation, our property declined in real value by 24% despite all our significant upgrades to the property and the fact that the presence of the quarry would have already been factored into the price we paid initially. In reality, the loss was probably much worse if the performance was to be compared to an appropriate housing index given that Acton was a growing community at the time.

My purpose of that illustration is simply that the impacts on adjacent communities are real. With the passage of time, the threat to the neighbourhood was much greater than that. The direct and indirect influences of the quarry operations led to a further deterioration to the neighborhood such that my old property today is now gone following a series of degradations that ultimately led to the house being no longer fit for habitation. This was the fate of other dwellings. In fact, 6 of the 13 houses along the road where we lived are now no longer there or are uninhabitable. So it is irrefutable that the impact to the immediate community was substantial to say the least. In the case of the Hidden Quarry, the number of homes within a similar radius to the quarry is two orders of magnitude greater.

Thank you for your attention.