

# Final decision for Hidden Quarry application won't come quickly, says chair at conclusion of tribunal

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*Parking lot outside the Guelph/Eramosa Township offices near Brucedale during the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal (formerly Ontario Municipal Board) deciding on approval for the Hidden Quarry. Kenneth Armstrong/GuelphToday*

After weeks of testimony and years of legal wrangling, the final arguments were made this week for and against an application for the proposed Hidden Quarry site near Rockwood.

"I thought it was never going to end," one woman was heard to exclaim Tuesday, shortly after the doors to council chambers opened.

Two days of closing arguments on Monday and Tuesday capped off a total of 26 days of hearings over seven weeks at the council offices of Guelph/Eramosa Township, but the local opposition to the project began in 2013.

"It's a little bit surreal at this moment to think that it's done," said Doug Tripp, president of Concerned Residents Coalition (CRC). "We are hoping the decision is what we want, but even if it isn't we have done everything we can do and there is no doubt about that."

CRC was one of a number of parties that had standing in the tribunal in opposition of the quarry planned by James Dick Construction Ltd. (JDCL). The Region of Halton, Halton Hills, County of Wellington and Guelph/Eramosa Township were also represented.

In total, 30 expert witnesses testified during the during the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal (LPAT), formerly Ontario Municipal Board.

Local opposition to the proposed quarry began around a kitchen table in a nearby heritage home, said Tripp. Through fundraising, the group built up a war chest to fight the project.

"I think one thing I am sure about is we have no regrets about doing everything we have done," said Tripp. "We've probably done more than we expected as far as building the case and working with the experts and lawyers."

With volumes of written material and extensive notes to sift through, hearing chair Scott Tousaw set an expectation that the final decision will take some time.

At the conclusion of the final arguments on Tuesday afternoon, Tousaw thanked the various counsel representing all of the parties in the tribunal.

Tousaw also thanked the 50-plus people in the public gallery in attendance — some throughout all of the tribunal — for their interest and 'exceptional behaviour.'

He promised he will give the application the consideration it deserves, but noted the decision will not be made quickly.

Immediately after the conclusion of the tribunal, JDCL executive vice-president Gregory Sweetnam told GuelphToday he hopes now that the hearing process is over he hopes the company's relationship with its neighbours will improve.

"We recognize the neighbours' concerns. The whole hearing process is about how do we address those concerns," said Sweetnam. "Now that the hearing process is over — if we are granted approval —we would like to get off on a good foot."

The material waiting to be extracted is needed in the construction industry, said Sweetnam.

"If it doesn't get approved, the rock doesn't go bad sitting in the ground. It will sit here for a period of time until we can get it out. But some other quarry has to open in some other place," he said.

Early on Tuesday, CRC's counsel Chris Barnett made his closing arguments, followed by a review by JDCL counsel David White. This followed final arguments made Monday by White and David Germain, counsel for the Regional Municipality of Halton and Halton Hills.

Concerns about the proposed project ranged from the effects on nearby fish and other wildlife habitats to traffic concerns along the haul route through Acton and dangers of blasting and unexploded ordnance.

Tripp said waiting weeks or months for the final decision is going to be a challenge.

"We are hoping the decision is what we want, but even if it isn't we have done everything we can do and there is no doubt about that," he said. "Now we wait."

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