

Hidden Quarry opponents continue to express disappointment

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Doug Tripp from the Concerned Residents Coalition of Rockwood. Troy Bridgeman/GuelphToday file photo

Criticism continues to pile following the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal's (LPAT) decision to approve an application from James Dick Construction Ltd. (JDCL) to operate a quarry located just outside of Rockwood.

The Town of Halton Hills released a statement saying they had repeatedly expressed concern about the project. They had noted the municipality would serve as a thoroughfare for haul trucks carrying aggregate without having a say over their route. Truck traffic, noise, public safety, air quality and the ability to negotiate haul routes are among other concerns for the town.

"It is ridiculous that the town cannot have any say over designated haul routes," said Rick Bonnette, Halton Hills mayor, in a press release. "It is unacceptable that our municipality will suffer the negative impacts of quarry operations that do nothing for our community."

Greg Sweetnam, vice-president for JDCL, said quarry opponents are more vocal than the numerous supporters. Sweetnam cited many government ministries, peer-reviewed witnesses and the conservation authority as those in favour of the site. He further noted Halton Hills as being unreasonable in their requests.

"The Town of Halton Hills for example, for the first time in Canadian history, wanted one company to enter into a road agreement to use Highway 7," Sweetnam said.

"We would be the only company in North America who would have to sign an agreement to run trucks across a provincial highway. That was just an absurd argument that didn't stand up at the end of the day."

The Town of Halton Hills had been an opponent among other municipalities opposed to the site as well as the Concerned Residents Coalition (CRC), whose actions were applauded by Bonnette.

In a press release, the CRC said they are disappointed the Ontario government has put a higher priority on the profits of aggregate companies than the integrity of rural communities and ecosystems.

"The Hidden Quarry will devastate our community," CRC President Doug Tripp said in a press release. "It will change forever the lives and livelihoods of residents, and the character of the neighbouring town of Rockwood."

Sweetnam disputed the idea of the quarry being a disruption to the community. He said a similar quarry in Puslinch went unnoticed by the mayor with eight months of full operation.

"As far as residents concerns with the noise, dust and public safety, those things are all assessed in detail through reports provided by us," Sweetnam said. "They're also reviewed multiple times by professionals in the government ... and they all came to the conclusion that this was a very doable thing."

The CRC's press release noted Ontario has more than 7,000 quarries representing between 50 and 100 year supply of aggregate. Sweetnam said he thinks this claim is misleading and that various levels of government agree that close-to-market quarries are the most responsible option.

"If you have a quarry up in Sudbury or Thunder Bay, that's not going to help you when it comes to supplying Toronto," Sweetnam said. "We could supply Toronto from Northern Ontario if you want to multiply the number of trucks on the road by 50 and burn 50 times as much greenhouse gas. You might be able to do that if you can find suitable material."

CRC further said JDCL can't be trusted to monitor environmental hazards. They also said they feel this shows the failure of the LPAT system, a point of view Bonnette also shares.

"I feel we simply weren't listened to by the LPAT," Bonnette said. "There's no sense in appealing to the LPAT, they're just going to support development."

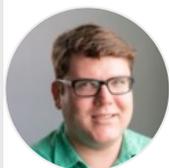
Sweetnam disagrees and feels the LPAT did a thorough job of investigating.

"The hearing officer put us through the wringer and we were able to convince on every parameter that the quarry was doable," Sweetnam said.

The CRC is calling on the Ontario government to intervene and put the quarry on hold, impose a moratorium on quarry applications and to convene an emergency summit to consult with stakeholders on the impact of aggregate extraction.

Sweetnam said he thinks the people of Ontario are the real winners of this outcome because of access to high-quality material for infrastructure. He noted the CN Tower, slated to stand for 1000 years, is made out of the same material extracted from the Hidden Quarry.

"That's what the Hidden Quarry is all about," Sweetnam said. "Getting access to those high-quality materials that will produce structures that will last a long time."



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