

EXTRACTION APPROVED



Rob Jowett

A contentious quarry proposal in **Guelph-Eramosa Township** has been approved following years of legal disputes, and could set a precedent for future decisions.

In a decision released February 11, the **Local Planning Appeal Tribunal** (LPAT) approved a proposal by **James Dick Construction** (JDCL) to build a quarry on a 39-hectare site at the northeast corner of Highway 7 and Sixth Line. Known as the Hidden Quarry, it was first proposed in 2012, but has been subject to ongoing local opposition, including an LPAT challenge from the township, **Wellington County, Town of Halton Hills, Halton Region**, and the local advocacy group **Concerned Residents' Coalition Rockwood**. Halton Hills and Halton Region initiated the case following concerns regarding the anticipated trucking routes for aggregate that would be extracted from the site and its potential impacts on local water sources. The LPAT hearing took place May 21, 2019 to July 9, 2019.

"We think it's a good decision," James Dick Construction executive vice-president **Greg Sweetnam** told

NRU. "This was a case where we had sign-off from basically all of the peer reviewers that the township had hired, and from all of the review agencies that all signed off, so it was more of a political opposition to it, as opposed to a scientific opposition."

The quarry will be used to extract amabel dolostone, a limestone variant and a type of rock needed as a strong building material. Amabel dolostone is considered far superior for construction due to its strength, especially for building projects like skyscrapers and bridges. Sweetnam says that the provincial supply of dolostone is low and many buildings and infrastructure projects have been forced to rely on lower-quality but more widely available materials, significantly reducing the resiliency and lifespan of those projects.

Guelph-Eramosa refused to approve the quarry proposal primarily due to concerns about the impacts of the quarry operation and a perceived lack of benefits for the township itself. The resolution adopted by the township's council on April 15, 2019 directing its staff to attend the LPAT hearings

appealing JDCL's proposal states that the quarry would not provide any economic or employment benefits to the town. Chief administrative officer **Ian Roger** told *NRU* that the township could not provide further comment until council had reviewed the decision.

Around 95 per cent of the trucks travelling to and from the quarry would use Highway 7 to transport aggregate material to Brampton, including to a JDCL-owned concrete plant in Bolton. This would mean passing through the centre of the Acton and Georgetown communities, which have local businesses and residential uses along the highway. Halton Hills mayor **Rick Bonnette** told *NRU* that the town opposed the quarry proposal at the LPAT in order to protect residents and businesses from the effects of the trucks and negotiate a different haul route which would require the company to use Highway 401 instead. He says as many as 26 trucks per hour could be passing through the downtown areas of these communities, and the highway there is very narrow and operates more like a main street which is unsuitable for heavy truck traffic. The LPAT

agreed with JDCL that the town did not have the right to restrict the company's use of a provincial highway.

"Imagine every trucking company in Ontario having to have a new permit or new agreement to drive on a provincial highway through every municipality that the highway goes through," says Sweetnam. "We believe it was just politics that were driving that kind of a ridiculous argument, but yet, the town of Halton Hills spent big bucks at a long [LPAT] hearing to put forward that proposition."

Bonnette told *NRU* that he had previously requested that the provincial **Transportation Ministry** consider a trucking bypass route north of Acton, which would divert traffic from downtown, but to date, the proposal has been denied.

Bonnette says there were also environmental concerns that groundwater could become contaminated from the mining operations. Most of the Hidden Quarry's supply of dolostone is below the water table, and would be extracted through subaqueous mining, a relatively untested practice. The LPAT decision determined that there would not be a significant

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effect on water quality, and that JDCL would be held financially responsible if there was any change or future concern around water quality.

Bonnette says the town also opposed the quarry due to the potential adverse effects of these issues and the lack of benefits to Halton Hills, as the town would receive no taxation or job growth due to quarry operations.

“I think the life of this quarry is going to be... for 20

years, so that’s going to be a huge long-term impact,” says Bonnette. “It’s ridiculous that the town cannot even have a say on the designated haul routes. It’s unacceptable that our municipality will suffer the negative impacts of the quarry’s operations that do nothing for the community. We have no benefits. There’s no taxation, there’s no assessment that we can do. And there hasn’t even been a demonstrated need for yet another quarry operation.”

Bonnette points to the Acton Quarry as an example of why he does not believe a new quarry is necessary right now. **Dufferin Aggregates** operates a quarry around 22nd Side Road and Third Line which also extracts dolostone. Bonnette says the quarry has not operated in over a year due to lack of demand, and says that means that JDCL does not need to open a new quarry. The LPAT hearing did not assess or consider the market needs for dolostone.

The LPAT decision includes an interim order to approve JDCL’s proposed official plan amendment and rezoning for the site. The final order is withheld until several

conditions are met, such as site plan approval from both the county and Halton Region and pending provision of additional environmental impact assessments on surrounding natural areas.

Sweetnam says JDCL has no issue with the conditions set by the tribunal, and adds that full approval could set a legal precedent which would allow future quarry disputes to be settled more easily.

JDCL is also looking to build a quarry in the 29.4 ha Woodlawn Guelph Campbellville Pit at the intersection of Twiss Road and Reid Side Road in the **Town of Milton**, which has faced similar opposition. 🌱

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