

Quarry expansion causes concern with local residents, debate continues

by Donna Danielli

It was standing room only in the Halton Region's Council Chambers on Wednesday, September 5. A public meeting was held to provide input to the Region's Planning and Public Works Committee on the proposed expansion by Dufferin Aggregates, which would extract an additional 83 hectares of aggregate from their quarry, while leaving a new buffer of 162 hectares.

Four delegations made applications to speak to the committee on the application, while an additional 20 people requested the opportunity to speak when Committee Chairman Mike Wallace opened the floor to questions. The region also received 28 written submissions prior to the meeting from those who wanted their concerns heard but were unable to speak at the meeting.

Environmental concerns and quality of life issues debated against job security and economics as the evening wore on.

Marion McMeeken, who resides close to the existing quarry, reminded the committee that "the proposed lands fall under the protection of the Niagara Escarpment Commission Act and as such, have the designation of a UNESCO World Biosphere. These lands are also listed as ESA 25 (Environmentally Sensitive) in

Halton Region. Since becoming aware of the planned expansion in May 2000, I have seen nothing in the proposal to convince me that the Escarpment, the environment, the area residents, or for that matter all Ontarians, will benefit from the approval of this proposal."

Jackie Fraser responded to this concern about the restrictions on the Niagara Escarpment, explaining that "as a former Niagara Escarpment Commissioner, I am fully aware of the goals and objectives of the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Aggregate extraction can be considered within the Escarpment Rural designation and it is an appropriate consideration in these areas because it is a temporary land use in which environmental impacts can be mitigated against."

Ms. Fraser also argued against environmental concerns, saying "Dufferin has dozens of experts in fields ranging from soil science to fisheries, botany and wildlife ecology, studying and monitoring their work at the quarry."

Local resident Karen Schuch asked the committee "At what point will we say that the preservation of the environment is more important than the all mighty dollar?"

Douglas Gray, the national representative of Communication, Energy and Powerworks responded,

saying "Our concern is for the people who work in the quarries. Environmental issues concern us all, but when the debate comes down to the environment versus jobs, our workers lose jobs, good paying jobs, some in excess of \$50,000 per year."

A number of Dufferin Aggregates' employees also stepped forward to comment on the effect on the economy Dufferin has and what denying the expansion could entail at a time when local quarries such as Milton Limestone are preparing to close.

"I have seen the effects of layoffs," says Andy Webster. "Milton turns into a ghost town."

Jan Sellens, also a local resident, expressed doubt about Dufferin Aggregates' plans to rehabilitate the quarry after all the aggregate has been removed and reminded the committee that "Dufferin once proposed turning the Milton quarry into landfill,"

and that "rehabilitation efforts began at the same time that Dufferin began buying the lands for the proposed extension."

Dick Coin, president of Condrain, the largest water main constructor in Ontario, sees Dufferin's expansion as necessary to boost local economy. The Halton Urban Structure Plan (HUSP) directs growth to this area, Mr. Coin reminded the committee.

"Competitively priced aggregate is essential for this development."

Quality of life issues and effect on property values cannot be factored out, say local residents.

"Our right to enjoy our property is exactly that," says Kim Wilson. "We're tired of pleading for protection from agencies and elected officials."

Residents expressed over and over again that the effects of blasting, noise dust and truck traffic have an impact on their quality of

life.

Halton Regional Council will not be making a decision on this application any time soon. The Town Councils of both Milton and Halton Hills must first vote on the application this fall and a Niagara Escarpment Commission amendment must be approved. Dufferin Aggregates' neighbour and owner of Glengate Farms, Jim Bulloch, stressed the need for Councils to take the time to consider the proposal carefully.

"No jobs are going away tomorrow if this application is turned down," says Mr. Bulloch. "I really question the need for the decision to be made now. The Region has the opportunity to conduct a thorough investigation before making a decision."

Anyone wishing to be notified of Halton Regional Council's decision on proposed amendment No. 18, must make a written request to the Regional Clerk.

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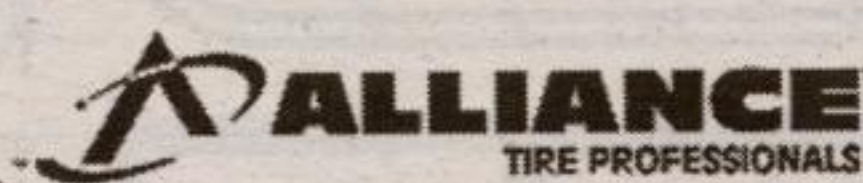
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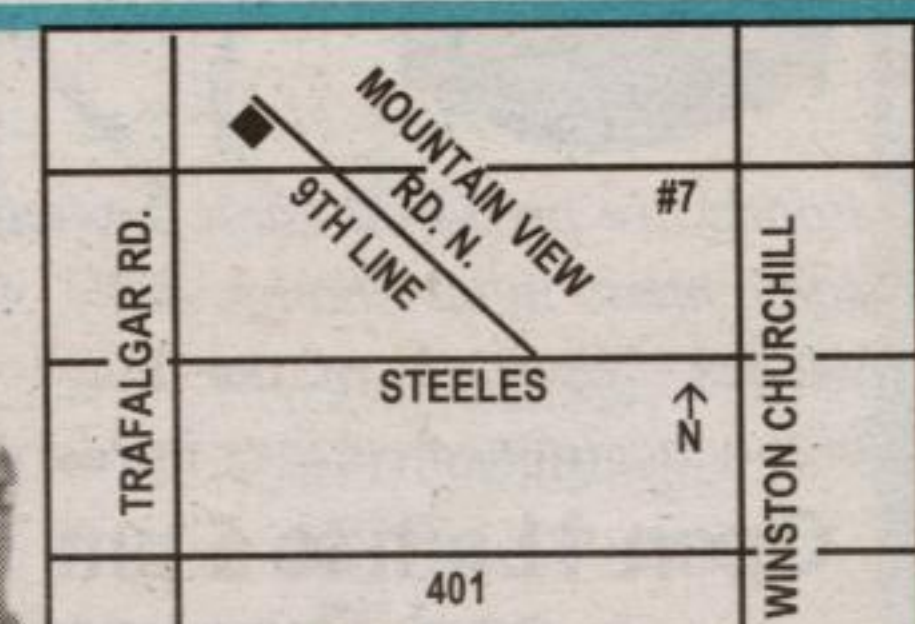
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