

Expansion of the Dufferin Quarry is in no way acceptable, say environmental groups at hearing

By MELANIE HENNESSEY

The Champion

There are no conditions that would make the proposed Dufferin Aggregates Milton quarry expansion "approveable," according to a lawyer representing two local environmental groups.

Toronto solicitor Joseph Castrilli came before a joint board of the Ontario Municipal Board and Environmental Review tribunal Friday to present his final arguments against the potential expansion on behalf of the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE) and Protect our Water and Environment Resources (POWER).

The joint board will decide the fate of the 85-hectare quarry

extension proposal, which straddles the Milton/Halton Hills border.

The hearing, which began in January and has since heard 65 days of evidence, is expected to wrap up today. If approved, Dufferin will be granted a licence from the Ministry of Natural Resources to extract minerals.

This is what Mr. Castrilli is trying to stop, presenting lengthy arguments and his interpretations on water-related evidence.

"When you distill the water evidence down to its basic component parts, there are significant problems with the application," he said.

He said that water discharge from the existing main Milton

quarry has shown evidence of E. coli.

"What you'll find is that 26 of the 47 months for which Dufferin did (water) sampling — from January, 2000 to November, 2003 — there were positive readings for E. coli in main quarry discharge."

While Dufferin Property and Resource Manager Sarah Lowe said this is correct, she explained that water naturally containing E. coli comes into the quarry through a stream and the water pumped out by Dufferin goes back into that stream.

"Any E. coli that's present is part of nature. If you have wildlife, you get bacteria," she said. "And where it does show up, it's at extremely low levels. There's no chance of that impacting any wells at all. We have a vigorous monitoring program."

As Mr. Castrilli continued speaking about E. coli, Dufferin's lawyer Jonathan Kahn smiled and shook his head, busily taking notes.

"It is no argument or defence that the water coming into the quarry has E. coli," Mr. Castrilli said. "Once the applicant manipulates that water, it becomes responsible for the quality of the subsequent discharge of that water."

Mr. Castrilli continually told the board that it doesn't have enough data on certain water aspects, like quality and levels, to approve the application.

But, Ms Lowe said she thinks Dufferin has provided an incredible amount of data for the hearing.

"It would be unreasonable to expect us to provide more data at this point," she said.

At press time yesterday, the joint board was hearing the rest of Mr. Castrilli's final argument. After the hearing, the board will make its decision, which Dufferin hopes will happen before the end of the year.

The expansion is supported by the Niagara Escarpment Commission, Halton Region, towns of Milton and Halton Hills and Conservation Halton.

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