

FORCE celebrates final greenbelt plan

By ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER

Special to The Champion

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) are celebrating the provincial government's final Greenbelt Plan released last week during a press conference in Kleinberg.

The Greenbelt Plan's specific rules directly impact FORCE's fight against Lowndes Holdings Corp.'s application for an aggregate quarry in Carlisle in a favourable way, according to Graham Flint, FORCE's spokesperson.

"We are doing the 'happy dance' right now," said Mr. Flint. "These announcements represent critical wins for us as a community and set the foundations for our future victory."

The community group was founded in May 2004 after residents learned about Lowndes Holdings' intentions to establish an aggregate quarry on 380 acres of prop-Concession -11 East in Flamborough.

Force alleges quarry would hurt environment

The quarry would damage the groundwater table and the surrounding environment as well as the neighbouring community, alleged FORCE.

Residents formed FORCE and began building a defence against Lowndes Holdings to block their application for the quarry. It hired many specialists to do technical studies on the land, the water and the environment as well as lawyers to fight the case in court.

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"We'd always felt that the substantive facts of the situation would make us victorious but now, with a strict set of environmentally protective regulations in place, the path to defeating the proposed quarry is becoming clearer," said Mr. Flint.

The Greenbelt Plan stipulates that new 'greenfield' aggregate developments in the greenbelt-protected countryside, which would impact key natural or hydrologic features within the natural heritage system, are prohibited. In addition, there are new rehabilitation requirements as well as a requirement to provide additional greenbelt lands to offset the lands consumed by the new aggregate development.

Lowndes Holdings' quarry proposal would damage provincially significant wetlands and significant woodlots and wouldn't provide additional greenbelt lands to replace those that would be consumed, said Mr. Flint.

"We were very concerned, since Lowndes Holdings Corp. made its preliminary application in September 2004 before the effective date of the greenbelt legislation, that the quarry proposal wouldn't be subject to the Greenbelt Plan and rules," said Mr. Flint.

"The announcement was very clear with regard to transitional situations involving aggregate development. It says that, in cases where there is a pending Official Plan amendment application in support of an aggregate extraction bylaw zoning change submitted after December 2003, the applications will be subject to the Greenbelt legislation. This requires Lowndes Holdings' application to conform to all the rules and requirements of the Greenbelt Plan."

Mr. Flint said that immediately following the plan's approval, FORCE applied to the City of Hamilton to have Lowndes Holdings' quarry application rejected as, the group believes, it doesn't conform to the new Greenbelt legislation rules.

"We realize that our work is not finished yet," said Mr. Flint. "We want to ensure that, should this application continue or another one be made in the future, we're prepared. As part of that effort, we will be completing our work on the technical studies we have already underway as they may be needed to convince the City of Hamilton to reject the application and will feel more comfortable if those studies are already prepared and waiting on the shelf should another quarry proposal come forward."

At press time, David Lowndes of Lowndes Holdings was unavailable for comment on the new developments.

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