Town made errors in opposing batching plants: Reader

(From page 5)

by some town officials are no more than scaremongering for self serving reasons using completely unsubstantiated facts, figures, and claims.

For example; the mayor has been quoted as stating that if batching is an allowed use the damage to the town's wells could cost $10 million.

However, experts who have experience developing and constructing municipal water systems estimate the cost to replace the two outdated wells in question with a completely new system at approximately $2.75 million (not $10 million) including investigation, engineering, property acquisition, well construction, tower or reservoir, and distribution system.

For example; The water quantities being used by St. Mary's for their batching operation are minute compared to other water users in the immediate area, none of which seem to present any concerns to the town or threat to the town's water supplies.

The town's wells pump about 1 million gallons per day and the nearby fish operations are capable of pumping about 1.3 million gallons per day combined, for a total of about 2.3 million gallons per day. St. Mary's batching operation uses an average of about 17,000 gallons per day with peak demands of about 75,000 gallons per day.

In fact, the St. Mary's well is not even drilled into the same aquifer as the one feeding the town's wells.

The town's claims that concrete batching operations pose a risk of polluting the local water supplies are also completely unfounded. Concrete batching plants are operated in strict accordance with regulations administered by the Ministry of the Environment and there is no possible threat of pollution. There are no fuel storage facilities on the Bloomington Road site and any small quantities of concrete admixtures used are properly handled. Water use above 11,000 gallons (50,000 litres) per day is also subject to approval by the Ministry of the Environment. Approvals which would not be granted if a potential problem existed.

In contrast, the mayor recently argued vehemently in support of a truck stop, which includes thousands of gallons of underground gasoline and diesel fuel storage, on the Sabiston property located on the south west corner of Bloomington Road and Highway 48. This truck stop, which is only 900 feet further away from the town's wells than St. Mary's operation, was bulldozed through council in spite of objections from the town's own planning department and many local residents. It was also completely contrary to the $78,000 planning study undertaken by the town to support their interim control by-law.

To date the town has spent close to $1/2 million trying to stop batching in Whitchurch-Stouffville. Although they claim that the issue is 14 other potential properties, make no mistake about it, the town's efforts are concentrated against St. Mary's who is operating the only batching plant on any of these 14 sites, which, by the way is a completely legal operation as the courts recently confirmed.

The town's compulsive actions against St. Mary's are clearly evidenced by their use of an interim control by-law.

Had they bothered to consult their own planning department they would have found that there were other options available (at a fraction of the cost that has been spent) to prohibit batching on the other sites.

I suppose if one really wants to get to the bottom of this and why the town has spent close to $1/2 million, they had better start asking questions and obtaining facts, not fiction and fairy tales.

Perhaps they should start by looking at some of the potential developments adjacent to the St. Mary's property, the planning implications of St. Mary's batching operation on those potential developments, and whose property just happens to be right in the middle of it all. This is definitely not an issue of protecting the town's water supplies as some would have you believe. Wake up Whitchurch-Stouffville!!

St. Mary's Cement Corporation is a multi billion dollar Canadian owned and operated company, who would not have become involved with this property had the town not given them written confirmation that they could use the property for their batching operation. They also do things in a proper, professional manner and would not be party, under any circumstances, to any operation that would have a negative impact on the environment or affect a municipality's water supplies.

In fact, last spring in an effort to work with the town and alleviate their concerns, St. Mary's voluntarily offered the town a number of safeguards which included among other things;

- to have any additional engineering necessary to satisfy the town's concerns completed at their own expense;
- to establish a monitoring system on the town's wells and to reduce or shut down their operation if any problems developed;
- to provide the town with sufficient financial security to guarantee the town's water supply and to consider financing the work necessary to upgrade the town's existing wells.

The town's actions forced me out of this particular venture as it did with a number of other long time residents of the town who had invested a great deal.

These people did not deserve to be treated the way they were and neither does St. Mary's Cement who goes out of their way to be a good corporate citizen.

It's about time that the residents of the town realized what is really going on here because it sure isn't an issue of water and it sure isn't their interests that are being protected.

Harold Scott
Former Resident

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