

Local agriculture group shares list of requests for proposed gravel pit

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce (NDACT) has released a list of requests for Strada Aggregate, a company proposing to quarry below the water table at a gravel pit near Honeywood.

The locally based volunteer taskforce held a virtual public meeting on Jan. 15 to discuss and receive input from community stakeholders on their strategy to approach Strada Aggregate regarding the quarry proposal. The meeting saw over 300 individuals in attendance virtually.

On Jan. 24, NDACT released a list of key components they are requesting Strada follow, starting with the hiring of a community trusted consultant.

NDACT said if the consultant agrees with the science behind the application studies and the science is deemed viable, they are prepared to not challenge the application. They added that as part of this agreement they request Strada create a substantial fund to aid in court costs for people who may experience water problems, and commit annually to funding 10 cents per tonne of their extracted aggregate to the Honeywood Arena.

'We think this is a reasonable approach,' said Karren Wallace, chair of NDACT. 'If it's going to go ahead, these are the two asks that we would like.'

However, NDACT notes that if the community trusted consultant sees the reports and does not agree that the science is supported, they ask that Strada keep their word and not continue with the application.

'Should Strada still pursue an application for a quarry, NDACT would fully engage in opposing such a quest,' reads the NDACT press release.

The Strada Aggregates quarry proposal was first brought up in October of 2021 with a presentation to Melancthon Council.

Located in the area of 4th Line and County Rd. 17 in Melancthon, Strada Aggregates has operated as an active gravel pit since 2004.

The company is now proposing an aggregate quarry, with assessments and studies being completed on the feasibility to extract below the water table.

If the reports of a company proposing to quarry below the water table in the region of North Dufferin sounds familiar, it's because it is. In 2011, an application was put forth by Highland's Company proposing a limestone 'mega-quarry', and was later pulled from the application following a 'Stop the Quarry' campaign.

In their presentation, Strada said while close in location to the former 'mega-quarry', theirs will be one tenth the size of the mega-quarry, and will be extracting 2 million tonnes as opposed to 10 million. It would also be located in an existing gravel pit rather than on agricultural land.

While Strada indicates the quarry will be different, Wallace argues that apart from size, the community is facing the same challenges and concerns regarding water.

?You need to be sure that once you've tapped into that bedrock, you know what you're doing,? said Wallace.

A decade since their fight against the mega-quarry, NDACT continues to meet on a monthly bases, in preparation for another quarry proposal.

?It's always been not if it comes back, but when it is going to come back again,? explains Wallace.

She added that NDACT has already seen community members expressing their displeasure since the new quarry was proposed.

?People are weary. It's one thing when you're taking gravel at the top of some land, but it's profoundly different when you start blasting into the bedrock and the aquifer,? said Wallace.

Strada's projected timeline for submission of application for the quarry is late 2022.