

Community meeting demonstrates disconnect between Strada and residents



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A local expert sounded the alarm about the proposed Strada Melancthon quarry project during a meeting at Horning Mills Community Hall on Nov. 4, warning a group of about 40 residents of the potentially destructive impact it could have.

The proposed quarry has recently attracted significant attention, as Strada continues to push ahead with plans that hydrogeology research expert Garry Hunter said are untethered from reality.

"This site plan works in the virtual model just fine, but it cannot work in the real world," he said. "They have not looked into or recognized the geotechnical restrictions. They don't understand the technical details of this quarry, which will be almost twice as deep as any other quarry in the Niagara Escarpment landform."

This proposed quarry will cut straight through an underground stream bringing water to Horning's Mill, which is essential to the town's wells.

Hunter continued by saying that Strada is seemingly unaware of the rock compositions beneath the surface, including an aquatard in the middle of the dig, which has a composition that severely restricts water flow that normally follows the subterranean stream to Horning's Mills.

That water, he said, will now be redirected into farmers' fields and other areas, causing flooding.

"They're underestimating water flow with all their modeling," he said. "Their designs will result in a reduction of water flow to Horning's Mills by up to 50 per cent."

Alongside the water issue, there are stability problems from the quarry, Hunter said. He noted that the current model will not withstand the environment, and digging as deep as they plan could lead to structural failure of the quarry's walls.

The quarry will also release more fine particles into the air, which will carry into communities around the area, such as Horning's Mills, Hunter noted.

This isn't the first time that a proposed quarry has threatened to potentially damage the water supply in the area. The proposed Highland Mega-Quarry in 2008 faced the same problems and was halted through efforts by local residents and the scientific community.

Nanci Malek, a resident of Melancthon Township, was part of that group that opposed the Highland Mega-Quarry, and she's opposing Strada's proposal as well. She penned an open letter, harshly critiquing the provincial government's lack of care for environmental impacts.

"Here in Melancthon, we already successfully stopped Seth Klarman's Highland Mega-Quarry; we stopped it due to the science," she said. "Science hasn't changed in all those years. Same aquifers, same karst drainage system, same science. Due to the Provincial Government's lack of environment and scientific understanding, they have deemed Ontario as an open extraction focus, removing the EA [Environmental Assessment] necessity from the ARA [Aggregate Resources Act] process. This is disastrous."

"The Governments of Canada need to understand that the most precious resource we have is our water," Malek added.

She continued by criticizing what she described as Strada's dishonest behavior. She said that Strada had made agreements in the past to respect studies conducted on the area, and not apply to build quarries if the results would be destructive to the environment.

Malek said they've broken their word.

"Back in 2010, when I was a township councillor, and fighting the Mega Quarry, Strada sat in our chambers and promised they would never dig below the water table," she said. "They lied. Here we are in 2025, and they wonder why the community doesn't trust them."

Both Hunter and Malek said that the aquifers in the area will affect more than just local townships if they are disrupted. The aquifers in the Melancthon area feed into five river systems: The Grand, the Pine, the Nottawasaga, the Noisy, the Boyne, and the Credit. If these systems were adversely damaged, it could impact millions of Ontario residents.

The controversy has attracted the attention of federal lawmakers, as Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seeback has stepped in and penned an open letter to Strada, insisting that they provide more clarity on the quarry's environmental impact and its impact on towns in the area.

"Following my October 14th community town hall in Honeywood and numerous conversations with residents, local organizations, and grassroots advocacy groups, it's clear that many in our community still have serious, unanswered questions about your proposed quarry project," he said. "Before the close of public consultation on November 10th, I am formally requesting that Strada provide clear, public responses to the following questions."

"These concerns come directly from residents, technical experts, and community organizations who have engaged extensively in this process," Seeback added.

He challenged a number of environmental concerns about the quarry and questioned why Strada's application did not include Fisheries Population and Impact Studies or any plans to protect Brook Trout and other fish populations.

He also asked what benefits this quarry would bring to the area, if any. He inquired about local jobs and how the quarry's trucks would impact local roads, including the ongoing bottleneck passing through Shelburne.

"It's clear to me there are still many serious, unanswered questions about Strada's quarry proposal. These range from the environmental and hydrological implications of the project to its impact on transportation, infrastructure, air quality, noise, and wildlife, to name just a few," said Seeback. "Dufferin-Caledon deserves complete and transparent answers."

He noted that the community has held up its end of communication and urges Strada to do the same.

"Residents of Dufferin-Caledon have engaged in good faith to understand the implications of this project," Seeback said. "It is now

Strada's responsibility to match that good faith with full transparency and accountability.?

Despite the volume of pushback and concerns from local residents and lawmakers, the quarry has continued with its application. This is in the face of a consultation period in which residents and experts have highlighted a myriad of problems.

For local residents looking to express their opinions on the proposed quarry, ARAapprovals@ontario.ca and ARAccomments@ontario.ca can be used to send letters, comments, or concerns.

Commenting closes on Monday, Nov. 10.