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Concern consultants missed things

To the Editior,

This article is in response to Sarah Sobanski's front page report on the public information meeting hosted by the proponent, Freymond Lumber Ltd. and Fowler Construction, and the consultants working on the their behalf, at the Fish and Game Club on March 20. Sarah's reporting of the presentations was, as always, factual and unbiased. But some of the information (or lack thereof) she was provided with by the proponent and some of his consultants cannot go unchallenged, such as market need for aggregate. Bancroft does not need two more quarries as stated by the proponent. The two existing quarries have reserves left for hundreds of years yet based on current and foreseeable market demand. Environmental impact concerns: the environmental consultant went to great length to talk about the eastern wood-pewee, listed by the province as a species of special concern and the mitigation measures proposed to preserve its habitat. One wonders why the consultant's report does not list the frequently observed presence of the rusty patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) in this area, given that it has the status of endangered species. Presumably it was not observed on the site or within 200 metres of the site during the site visits, thus not an issue of concern? The environmental report refers the subject of the risks to groundwater associated with quarry operations to the hydrogeological consultant. The latter's report conveniently limits its field testing to the site proper and the investigation of the zone of influence to 500 metres beyond the site. No regard is given to the risks of potentially disastrous damage to the water balance of the spring fed lakes within 2.5 kilometres of the site due to blasting. Blasting issue: The representative of Explotech Engineering Ltd., which conducted the blasting analysis, suggested that in 70 years of research there had never been any damage from blasting that was carried out within the provincially set limits for air and ground vibrations. This is a misrepresentation of the true risks of open pit blasting because accidents do and have in fact occurred as a result of violations of regulatory limits due to errors, expediency, carelessness or ignorance by/of blasting contractors, resulting in property damage, injuries and even death caused by fly-rock. This is why the mining industry has developed programs to predict the range of safe zones from fly-rock for persons and equipment based on blast load parameters. Using the same parameters as Explotech used to demonstrate the feasibility of safe blasting in its report, one can calculate the recommended fly-rock safe zone. Using the Terrock R&M model, this safe distance for persons calculates to 700 plus metres. This would put more than 40 residences and businesses and a long stretch of Hwy 62, Bay Lake Road and Gable Road at risk. Given these facts, one must seriously question a report that completely omits to address the No. 1 risk associated with open pit blasting, namely fly-rock. And one must question how open pit blasting can possibly be justified within this populated area.

Peter Wagner on behalf of the Quarry Awareness and Research Group