

Mumbles from the peanut gallery



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By Nate Smelle

ON Sunday I had the opportunity along with 150 or more so others to take in the public meeting regarding the proposed Freymond quarry at the Faraday Community Centre. I was especially interested in the outcome of this meeting considering it had been a couple years since I had received a thorough update regarding the status of this project.

Rolling in just before 1 p.m. I realized that I would not be disappointed in the proceedings when I struggled to find a parking spot in the large lot behind the community centre. Noticing there was not an empty seat in the house when I walked in, and that there were signs in the crowd which read "Protect our Water," and "No Quarry?", I ducked into the kitchen where I could get a good view of the room from the service window.

Overall, I found the meeting to be very informative, with solid arguments made on both sides. According to Brian Zeman, the president of MHBC Planning Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, all the boxes on the checklist validating the quarry had been ticked off. However, gauging by the timing and volume of the applause that afternoon, it appeared that roughly three quarters of those in attendance were not in favour of the proposed quarry.

Despite the overwhelming amount of information and issues discussed that day, the most telling statement I jotted down entered my right ear as a mumble coming from the woman beside me in the peanut gallery. While I stood in the kitchen listening to one of the seasonal residents ask why they had just learned of the quarry when they have owned a property nearby the site for more than a decade; and why the organizers had decided to hold the meeting after most of the seasonal residents had closed their cottages for the winter, the woman beside me responded laughing sarcastically, "Yeah, so then the cottagers can run our town.?"

Herein lies the problem. Although this seasonal resident who cares about this community enough to muster up the courage to voice her concerns to the large crowd made valid arguments in regarding the potential of traffic issues, noise and water pollution generated by the proposed quarry, in some folks' opinion she is still not considered a part of this community.

Does not she and her family pay property taxes and spend money in and around the Bancroft area whenever they choose to escape the hustle of Toronto and enjoy the peacefulness of North Hastings? We all know that waterfront property owners pay significantly more property taxes than the rest of us. Therefore, if we define the value of one's opinion on simply their monetary contribution to the community then should not our waterfront property owners - most of which who are seasonal residents - at the very least have the opportunity to share their opinion about a project such as a mine or quarry operating in their backyard? Is there no value in listening to the cottaging community that live in this community part-time?

This us and them mentality which Pink Floyd sang about on their album Darkside of the Moon back in the 70s does nothing to contribute to progress. As Algonquin Elder Katherine said, "We all came from the same place, and we are all going back to the same place" and that's the land.?"

Speaking with Lou Freymond owner/operator of Freymond Lumber Ltd. about the proposed quarry the morning after the meeting,

he made a good point regarding the need for tourism and other industries in the area, if our local economy is going to flourish. Though I agree with him, I believe we need to be cautious and careful with long-term land-use planning whenever we contemplate opening up land and water in the area to development that is already contributing to the integrity of our local economy. Take for example Grail Springs which employs 40 people and contributes in the ballpark of \$3 million of revenue to the area each year. Whether the proposed quarry is good or bad in terms of economic growth, it seems odd to me that the Ministry of Tourism in Ontario would sign off on the project before consulting with a business of such stature.