

Faraday quarry: Is it worth it?



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By Nate Smelle

In less than two weeks Hastings County council will be faced with a decision which will shape the future of many of our communities in North Hastings. On June 18, the 14 members of council representing each of the municipalities in the county will vote on the zoning bylaw amendment necessary for the proposed quarry in Faraday to move forward. The reason I believe this decision carries so much weight is because ultimately it is a choice between whether Bancroft and the surrounding area are to remain a popular destination for cottagers and tourists; or whether it is to become a so-called 'quarry town.'

Writing on the proposed development since it was first announced publicly in the summer of 2015, I have: read hundreds of pages of reports and listened in on several hours of presentations from each of the consulting firms working on behalf of Freymond Lumber and Fowler Construction; spoken with dozens of neighbouring full-time residents, cottagers and business owners, including Madeleine Marentette of Grail Springs and Mary Mackie of Mackie Greenhouse and Farm; interviewed Chief James Marsden of the Alderville First Nation, and Dr. Sharon Cowling regarding her research on the dangers of blasting at the base of a watershed; hiked a significant portion of the property-line with residents living adjacent to the proposed site on Bay Lake Road; and toured the site with Lou Freymond, one of the owners of the proposed quarry.

Going over my notes, recordings, letters to the editor and the articles I along with other reporters in the community have written on the proposed quarry, I began making a list of all the people who have come out to support or oppose this development. As it stands, the number of those against the quarry is 108; those for it 11 - eight of whom will directly profit from the development. By means of this investigation over the past four years, I believe it is fair to say that the majority of the community is against operating a quarry in this location - a 33.3-hectare parcel of land situated less than three kilometres from downtown Bancroft and nearby four spring-fed lakes.

The numbers always tell a story. In my opinion, when it comes to the quarry in Faraday the numbers clearly reveal that this proposed development is detrimental to the local economy and people's quality of life. They also force us to contemplate whether this type of industrial use of the land still fits in North Hastings considering tourism, not mining, is our economic 'bread and butter.' Each of these numbers need to be taken into consideration when county council votes on June 18.

Another number that needs to be looked at is 20 - the number of trucks on the road coming and going from the site every hour the quarry is in operation. The number 20 in this instance raises a few questions that also need to be asked before the vote goes down. For one, with that many trucks on the road on such a regular basis, what will be the increased cost to municipalities from the toll this heavier traffic will have on local roads and bridges?

Also, recognizing that having a local source of aggregate is being touted as a potential benefit of the quarry, how much of the aggregate being transported will be bought and used locally? Does demand in the Bancroft area require this amount of aggregate to

be transported so frequently? Does this mean that the existing local sources of aggregate cannot keep up with the demand? Are we dealing with a shortage of this resource in North Hastings? What about the impact of this traffic on the summer patio scene at The Granite and the Bancroft Brew Pub?

I, like many in the community, am curious to find out where our MPP Daryl Kramp and MP Mike Bossio stand regarding the proposed quarry and each of these questions.

The last two numbers worth looking at are 40 ? the number of workers employed by Grail Springs; and four ? the approximate number of jobs that could be created by the proposed quarry.

Doing the math, there is really only one remainder ? a single question for members of Hastings County council to ask themselves before casting their vote on June 18. That question being, is it worth it?