

Opposition to proposed quarry getting louder



By Nate Smelle

Opposition to the Proposed Freymond Quarry appears to be growing over the past week, with a number of representatives from the local business community stepping forward to speak out against the project. Fifty local residents also added their voices to the outcry, gathering for planning session on Thursday, July 9 at the Mackie's Greenhouse on Gaebel Road.

Co-owner and operator of the Lucky Duck Tattoo parlour in downtown Bancroft, Lisa Bickert took the afternoon off work to be a part of the meeting. As a resident of L'Amable she has many concerns about the proposed quarry, as a local business owner she is equally concerned.

'The town is where we make our living, and we are trying to keep it living and going,' said Bickert.

'If nobody wants to come up here to cottage, and nobody wants to come up to buy property we're done for. We are the next big thing in cottage country. Muskoka is very expensive, Haliburton is expensive and we have such beautiful land and such beautiful waters here. If we ruin this we will have nothing to offer and the tourists will stop coming.'

As one of the 40+ people employed year-round by Grail Springs, Barbara Shaw also worries that the presence of an aggregate quarry next door could be bad for the tourism industry. After speaking with one of the experts at the public information session held by EcoVue Consulting Services Inc. on June 25, she became more concerned about the negative impacts that the quarry could have on the community. Shaw said that guests and staff use the 100-acres of forests and fields at the retreat centre on a daily basis throughout the year to go hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, canoeing and to practice meditation and yoga. Pointing out that the noise from the Freymond's mill can already be heard at the back of the Grail Springs property, she does not expect the quarry to make the atmosphere more peaceful.

'What we provide here is important,' said Shaw.

'We are retreat centre and we are a place where people come to heal. It's not like we are some chain hotel. We feel that what we are doing really has value. I get that they are talking about creating four or five jobs and that's great, but if this goes ahead we will be impacted. We have to be concerned about protecting 40 plus jobs here year-round.'

Purchasing their own slice of paradise on Jeffrey Lake more than nine years ago, Mike and Susan Freeman are extremely disturbed by the idea of a quarry operating so close to their lakeside residence. Like most of their neighbours on the lake they fear the noise and vibrations generated by the quarry will pollute their water, air and quality of life.

'We can hear traffic from Hwy. 62 now, so how can they try and tell us we're not going to hear the constant noise from the rock crusher and the trucks going in and out of there,' he said.

'What about the damage to the roads and the infrastructure that we will have to pay for? What about our property value? Will the municipality charge us less in property tax if this thing goes in and lowers all of our property values? I doubt it! I think this is a net economic loss for the surrounding communities.'

Councillors from the Township of Faraday where the quarry would be located have remained silent regarding their stance on the controversial proposal, while Bancroft Council appears to be divided in regards to the quarry's approval. So far Bancroft Councillors Charles Mullett and Bill Kilpatrick have spoke out against the project on social media and Councillors Tracy and Barry McGibbon have come out in support of the quarry. Before the application process for the proposed quarry can move forward, it must first attain approval from Hastings County, where it is currently under review.