

Plan to close Clearview road stirs residents, environmental groups

NEWS Aug 16, 2018 by [Ian Adams](#) Wasaga Sun

A coalition of residents and environmental groups is continuing a fight against a road agreement it says was reached behind closed doors and could have a negative impact on community safety and the environment.

A group calling itself Quarry Aware – a coalition of residents and citizen groups – is raising questions about the deal that saw what was formerly County Road 91 transferred to an aggregate company.

While the agreement between the County of Simcoe, Clearview Township and Walker Industries to transfer 91 to Walker is now more than six years old – one of the conditions of [Walker expanding its quarry operations west of Duntroon](#) – the process of handing over and closing the road has been delayed while the township gets approvals from the Niagara Escarpment Commission to upgrade the surrounding road network.

Under the agreement, Walker would take ownership of County Road 91 west from the 10th Concession to the township boundary, and nearly \$10 million would be spent in upgrades to 91 east to Duntroon – which are now complete – as well as the 10th Concession and the [26/27 Nottawasaga Sideroad](#).

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The work would largely be financed by the aggregate company.

Quarry Aware member Doug Dingeldein said the matter has been brought back to the fore because of the upcoming municipal election, citing community security and road safety issues.

"We want to put pressure on people who are running," he said. "It's an issue because there's a growing awareness in the community of the implications of closing that road."

"People are stunned when they find that the road is going to be closed, they don't believe it," he said. "It's been dragged on so long that people think it's gone away, it's dead, because nothing has happened."

The environment is also a factor, as the agreement specifies that in closing 91, the 26/27 Sideroad – which is essentially only passable in summer – would be upgraded to year-round use; environmentalists say that would negatively affect a nearby cold-water stream used as a spawning area for brook trout.

In 2015, the NEC denied the township's application to upgrade Sideroad 26/27 west of the 10th Line to the municipal boundary. The municipality has since made an application to amend the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP), and is challenging the NEC's decision through the Niagara Escarpment Hearing Office (NEHO).

The NEC turned down the permit because the project did not meet the commission's test of 'essential', though NEC planners had supported the application. The NEC's decision has been backed at the tribunal by neighbours and the Blue Mountain Watershed Trust, which has party status at the NEHO hearing.

George Powell, a member of the Trust's Watershed Action Group, said while the Trust is not affiliated with Quarry Aware, the two groups share similar goals.

Powell said the Trust wanted to see a class environmental assessment of the 26/27 proposal, "otherwise (the township) would not be in this mess."

"This is a transportation issue, but it is also an environmental issue," he said, noting the sideroad runs through the highest point in Ontario and is the headwaters for four area streams.

Powell said several additional wetland areas along the sideroad were not documented in the original application by the township, and the Trust has asked the Minister of the Environment to suspend the hearing process.

"The initial failure by Clearview Township to carry out the appropriate level of environmental assessment remains as a serious and major problem," Powell wrote to Minister Rod Phillips in July. In response, the ministry declined to get involved, citing the ongoing hearing process.

A status update on the township's appeal will be held Aug. 18.

Clearview Township officials declined to comment to Quarry Aware's position on the agreement. In an email to Simcoe.com, the township's communications and marketing co-ordinator Tim Hendry stated the township's appeal of the NEC decision is ongoing, and municipal officials continue to work toward completing an amendment to the NEP.

The township is also awaiting on the NEC to approve a development permit to repave the 10th Line from 124 to north of 26/27. The township budgeted \$4 million in the 2018 budget for the work; \$3 million would come from Walker, while the township's share would be funded through gas tax revenue.

Quarry Aware has asked for a traffic study to be undertaken on the area, and "none has been forthcoming," said Dingeldein.

"We want it stopped – there are no ifs, ands, buts or maybes, we want the deal jettisoned. That's the easiest thing," Dingeldein said. "I don't think the taxpayers in Clearview have a really good idea of what their council is spending on this project – spending on lawyers, planners, experts, studies, and it's been going on a long time."

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