This page was exported from - Caledon Citizen
Export date: Mon Sep 7 11:42:11 2026 / +0000 GMT

Proposed quarry project in Cataract brings residents together to protect water

By Rob Paul

To bring attention and awareness to a potential quarry project in Cataract, multiple environmental groups have banded together to protest the proposal by Canadian Building Materials (CBM), a division of St. Marys Cement, a subsidiary of Brazilian company Votorantim Cimentos.

Last week the groups held a protest to help spark the conversation.

Over a year ago, St. Marys publicly announced their intention to apply for a quarry in the Cataract area. It was indicated the quarry would be upwards of 800 acres and nearly 100 feet deep.

?We have to think globally and act locally,? said WW Campaign Director Mike Balkwill. ?Gravel mining, the extraction and consumption of aggregates makes a significant contribution to the climate crisis. If the cement industry was a country, it would be the third largest emitter of CO2 globally.?

The continued issues with gravel mining have been a sore spot in recent years for Ontarians who want to see the health of the land protected.

?Working on gravel mining issues over the last two decades feels like living a perpetual groundhog day,? said Graham Flint, former president of Gravel Watch Ontario. ?Time and time again, from communities across Ontario, citizens would reach out for help, dismayed that the current system is so tilted in favour of the industry and feeling betrayed that the governments who they believed would protect them, their homes, and their communities didn't. The time for sweeping reforms of gravel mining is long overdue. Gravel mining is socially and environmentally destructive and its continuous growth needs to be stopped.?

But how did the protest and the fight against the proposed quarry get this point? It started at a grassroots level in Caledon with residents who were concerned about the potential impact it may have when the details about the size of the quarry became public.

?That's when our community took notice,? said Cataract resident and President of Friends of the Forks Preservation Society David Sylvester. ?We were alarmed and worried because of the environmental consequences of this massive open pit mine. So, we created a couple of committees and hired an environmental lawyer and planner to work with us on this.?

The biggest red flag with the quarry project in Sylvester's eyes is the overall long-lasting impact it will have on residents' water sources and the species in the Credit River.

?The groundwater supplies all of the wells in the west portion of Caledon,? said Sylvester. ?In the village of Cataract, all homes rely on private wells for their water. The removal of the dolomite and subsequent water table alterations will damage, for eternity, the ground water and wells in the area.

?In order to make a quarry like this functional, the operators will need to pump out tens of millions of litres weekly from the floor of the quarry to controlled flooding. Then they'll either pump it into the Credit River or into adjacent wells?discharge wells?and indirectly that water will flow back into the Credit River. The other concern is all this diverted water that's pumped back into the Credit River will potentially be contaminated and be warmer and disrupt fish habitats. It's inconceivable that it wouldn't have a detrimental effect on the Credit River.?

The reason CBM St. Marys is proposing the quarry is to mine limestone for cement production in Ontario?an essential part of the cement business?but the issue to Sylvester isn't the purpose of the quarry, it's the location.

?I'm not opposed to gravel mining and quarries in Ontario; of course we all rely on those products for our infrastructure,? he said. ?But the fundamental issue we have is their decision to apply for a mine right beside the Credit River, beside Forks of the Credit Park, adjacent to a historic village (Cataract), and within the GTA. It's a very poor choice environmentally for a quarry. There is a hundred-year supply of gravel and stone in Ontario, the only problem for the gravel companies is that the profit margins are reduced if they're forced to source their stone and gravel further away from market. If they sourced their gravel from northern remote areas in Ontario it would be more expensive.?

The flaw in this logic can be pointed at with more carbon emissions being produced if companies are forced to haul gravel from sources that are further away, but Sylvester says there are other options for moving resources.

?There's a much better option: source gravel and rock in northern Ontario adjacent to Lake Huron and Lake Superior ports.

Though this started over a year ago, Sylvester knows the fight to stop the quarry project is far from over. Right now, he and the other groups trying to stop it are working with the Region and Town to ensure it can't go forward, but he knows companies like St. Marys have nearly unlimited resources.

?Our intention is to stop this quarry and ensure they don't get approval for the project,? he said. ?The application process will likely carry on for several years and likely be decided in an LPAT (Local Planning Appeal Tribunal) hearing. We will carry on and are communicating with Town Councillors and Regional Councillors. We're working with the planning department in the Town of Caledon and in the Region of Peel to do our best to fine-tune the official plans of both Caledon and Peel to protect communities from the devastating environmental effects of these massive projects.?