

Public being consulted on Lafarge expansion

By Bill Rea

Lafarge Canada is looking to expand its operation near Caledon village, and is trying to keep the public up to date.

The company hosted an open house session last week at Caledon Village Place, at which the plans were explained. There was not too much in the way of opposition, although some officials indicated they wanted to hear more.

The proposed expansion is slated for what's known as the Limebeer property. It's on the east side of McLaren Road, south of Charleston Sideroad, at Lots 14 and 15, Concession 2 in west Caledon. The property is about 44.8 hectares, and Green Lake runs down its east side.

Information provided by the company at the open house stated the proposed area to be licenced under the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) will be about 40 hectares, with the actual extraction area taking up 33.3 hectares.

This will be an expansion of what is known as the Caledon Main Pit. There are three main pits, and Carly Marshall, a planner with MHBC, said there will just be extraction on the Limebeer site. All the processing work on the material will be done on the eastern of the three main pits. The extracted material will be transported on an internal road network.

?No processing will occur on the Limebeer site,? she said, adding that would not be the case if some other company owned the property.

Access to the extraction operation comes from a signalized intersection off Highway 10, south of the Caledon Fairgrounds.

This proposal will still require the approval of the Town for an amendment to the Official Plan and a rezoning. As well, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) will have to issue a licence. Chris McGuckin, land director for Lafarge, said MNR won't issue the licence until the Official Plan ammendment is place.

Mal Wensierski, land manager for Lafarge, said the rezoning and Official Plan ammendment will require a public process, including a public information meeting. She added last week's session was required under the ARA.

She also said the main pit has been active for years. ?It's been allowed to operate for a very long time,? she remarked.

Wensierski added the material in the Limebeer site is geologically similar to what's been extracted from the main pit. ?Absolutely all the same products could be created,? she said.

She also said there has not been much negative reaction so far. There have been talks going on with representatives of the Green Lake cottage association since 2008. Members of the association wants the natural environment of the area maintained, and Wensierski said that's in line with government policy.

McGuckin said the plan is to carry out the extraction in three phases, starting at the southwest corner and heading north, then east. That will include progressive rehabilitation.

The area covered by the licence is expected to yield about 5.2 million tonnes of material,. but he wasn't able to say how long the pit is likely to operate.

?It's all market driven, in terms of demand for the product,? he said.

He added they will be able to extract up to one million tonnes per year, but the material taken out of Limebeer will likely be blended with that from the other pits.

Councillor Doug Beffort seemed impressed with some of what he saw.

?This is probably one of the easier pits to contemplate,? he remarked, but added the public has been asking the same questions that are raised with other such operations are discussed.

One matter he said needs to be addressed is why disturb this area where there's already a lot of material being extracted.

?It's not as easy as it looks,? Beffort observed. ?It will be a difficult decision to make. They're all difficult.?

He was also pleased the cottage association is working with Lafarge. ?I think that's a great sign,? he said.

This is going to be one of the first aggregate issues new Councillor Barb Shaughnessy will have to address. She was at the meeting, commenting it was the first chance for her to look at what's proposed, and adding she still has to meet with the Green Lake association.

?I'm totally neutral,? she said. ?I believe it's better i get to know all sides before I can do anything.?