



Working to Protect Your Community and Environment

We must not ignore the lessons of the Walkerton contaminated water tragedy

It is almost 20 years since the contaminated water crisis in Walkerton Ontario claimed seven lives and caused serious health issues for hundreds more in the community. Understandably, the Town of Walkerton doesn't want its name to be synonymous with the tragedy. But at a time when environmental protections are being shredded by Premier Ford we have reason to be concerned about a similar crisis arising from the Hidden Quarry application in Rockwood.

The contamination of the Walkerton water supply by *E.coli* from agricultural run-off was the result of a "perfect storm" of factors, including:

- A municipal well with an inadequate buffer zone separating it from agricultural operations
- A very heavy rainstorm in the area
- A porous limestone or karst geology that allowed very rapid movement of contaminated surface water in the sub-surface rock to the municipal well (as much as 80 times the rate predicted by groundwater modelling)
- A water chlorination system that was unable to cope with the infiltration of contaminated water.

There is a significant risk of a similar incident occurring in Rockwood should the Ontario government approve the Hidden Quarry application. The circumstances are very similar:

- Rockwood Well #4, soon to be put into service, is located 1000 metres from the quarry site
- The local geology including that of the quarry site itself is fractured, porous, karstic limestone
- The quarry site is adjacent to agricultural operations including a livestock farm on its northern perimeter
- The creation of a water filled pit from excavation provides a surface to groundwater conduit. This conduit would enable surface contamination to infiltrate groundwater and enter nearby domestic wells and the new municipal well #4. (See Illustration)

James Dick Construction Ltd. asserts that there can be no interaction between the quarry and Well #4. However our groundwater modelling expert offers a cautionary opinion, finding that significant uncertainty exists in the modelling of groundwater flow in the area. As a consequence there is a risk that flow from the quarry could carry contaminants to the aquifer feeding the well.

The "Precautionary Principle" must be applied to something as critical as our water supply. Unless we are absolutely sure that contamination of drinking water cannot occur—and the evidence is that we can not be absolutely sure —then the risk of contaminated drinking water is too great to take.

The Concerned Residents Coalition is alerting residents, and the government of Ontario to the possibility of another Walkerton if James Dick Construction Ltd.'s application for the Hidden Quarry is approved.

The Ontario government must protect Rockwood's drinking water and Stop the Hidden Quarry.

