

Letters
TO THE EDITOR

Short term gain, long term pain

To the editor,

As a resident and farmer in Belmont I have grave concerns about FGC's (Fundy Gypsum Company) intent to mine west of the Ferry Road. For my family, as for many others who live here on the Avon Peninsula, years of hard work and financial investment are in danger of crumbling from the effects of a short-term venture aimed primarily at enriching the shareholders of United States Gypsum, which owns 100 per cent of FGC.

FGC, in what seems a rather secretive, conniving process, has enticed landowners—with money and retention of rights to timber on their former land—to sell land to the company. The company has acquired some 1,100 acres west of the Ferry Road in the heart of our beautiful peninsula, and intends to apply to the provincial Department of Environment for approval to mine gypsum in this area.

It is not only future damage that is of concern. The immediate issue is the damage that has already occurred and is continuing at a rapid pace. Clearcutting, road building, and extensive core drilling are destroying the natural habitat. An intact, undisturbed environment is an essential requirement for conducting a legitimate and accurate Environmental Assessment. The present degradation of the environment is like tampering with or destroying evidence in a criminal investigation.

The gypsum company has promised to be honest and transparent in its dealings with the community. If they mean what they say, here are some of the key questions I would like them to answer:

1. When did FGC begin buying land for a mine west of Ferry Road?

2. Were landowners given a deadline for removing the

timber on lands they sold to the company? If so, what was established?

3. Were landowners told that land they sold would be combined with lands purchased from their neighbors, and that the gypsum company had imminent plans to use the whole for a mine?

4. Were landowners informed about the detrimental effects of the mine—definite, probable, and possible?

5. FGC says they will be responsible for any damage to water quantity or quality resulting from a mine west of the Ferry Road. How will this be done? How will it be guaranteed? How long will it last?

6. What environmental monitoring of the current Miller Creek mine has been done since operations began there? Have reports been made available to community residents? If not, why? Are they available now?

7. What is FGC's reclamation plan for the current Miller Creek mine? How much money has it set aside for this?

I have written two previous letters: one to Fundy Gypsum Company requesting answers to my questions and concerns and an end to the ongoing destruction of our watershed west of the Ferry Road; and one to Warden Dauphinee and Municipal Councillors calling on them to manifest their integrity by becoming actively involved in their duty to protect and enhance the sustainability of all communities of West Hants.

I am also calling on fellow West Hants residents to become aware and involved, for it could be your own community, your own livelihood that is threatened and destroyed next.

**Pamela DeNicola
Belmont**