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NDACT calls for action against aggressive aggregate asks

Written By **MARNI WALSH**

A list of aggressive ?asks? by the Ontario Sand Stone and Gravel Association has emerged from the March 29 exclusive Provincial Summit on Aggregate Reform held in Caledon.

The representatives of the aggregate industry met with Progessive Conservative government officials to discuss ?removing red tape? for the industry. Despite protests, Stakeholders such as the Federation of Agriculture, Enviromental Protection groups, and citizen coalitions, including the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce (NDACT,) were shut out of discussions.

Last week, NDACT revealed some of the most concerning of the Aggregate Industry requests:

? Removing the ability of a municipality to set hours of operation for pits and quarries

? Allowing below-the-water table aggregate operations anywhere, including places where they are currently excluded (e.g. oak Ridges Moraine national Linkage and Core areas)

? Allowing commercial fill to be brought in as part of the rehabilitation process - without requiring additional approvals or having to abide by current Table One soil requirements

? No requirement for new studies or approvals once a licence is approved when they apply for or amend an operational permit

? Removing the Niagara Escarpment's role in approving pits and quarries

? Removing the requirement for appeals under an aggregate permit to be heard at Local Planning Appeal Tribunals (LPAT) and create a special tribunal specifically for the industry

? Proclaim permit by rule allowing routine approvals to be automatic upon submission

? Permit aggregate extraction within endangered and threatened species habitats

? Expropriation of municipal road allowances to permit access to aggregate.

After years of fighting to protect the Headwaters against a massive open pit mine in Melancthon, and working to institute protective measures in the Aggregate Resources Act and the Provincial Policy Statement, battle weary residents are voicing disappointment, but not defeat.

?Between the bickering heralding the October federal election and playing whack-a-mole with the Ontario government's social and environmental ?reforms?, it is hard to stay positive,? says Food and Water First Executive Director Donna Baylis. ?However, this is not the time to lose heart. We need to be as determined as ever, persevering to hold our ground. We are the guardians of the legislation untold numbers of people have enacted for us and our children, to make our society better. We can't allow one moment of exuberance to be self-destructive.?

NDACT Chair, Karren Wallace warns, ?Governments don't take a lot of stock in form letters and on-line petitions, so please send your individual comments by May 1, 2019 to aggregatereform@ontario.ca. If the only comment you submit is the importance of the agriculture sector to the Ontario economy, so be it. This government seems to understand money.?

?In 2011, 28,000 people showed up to Foodstock,? says Wallace. ?The following year 40,000 people showed up to Soupstock - all in

the name of shutting down the mega quarry. What is being proposed here for the aggregate industry would seem to make another proposal for a mega quarry a walk in the park.?

?We need our 68,000 voices to ring out again and show this government, and future governments, our rare and valuable Class 1 farmland is not for sale,? stresses the NDACT Chair. ? Agriculture is already open for business. In fact, in 2017, Ontario's family farm and food processing businesses contributed $39 billion to Ontario's economy and employed over 820,000 Ontarians. Agriculture and agri-food processors are the number one economic contributor to Ontario's overall economy. (Source: Ontario Federation of Agriculture).?

?Stay strong,? says Donna Baylis. ?Know that your opinion counts. Let the government hear your voice protecting our future, even if it is just one paragraph. It may seem a drop in the ocean ?yet what is any ocean, but a multitude of drops?? Visit: foodandwaterfirst.com/events/call-to-action-to-may-1st/