

October 29, 2019

Dear Paula Duhatschek:

I write to express my concern with the October 29th article: *Province's plans to change gravel pit rules could harm local water, natural areas: report*. The article doesn't portray a fair representation of the changes being proposed by government.

First, the proposed changes to the *Aggregate Resources Act (ARA)* will provide the municipalities *more* input into an aggregate operation that wants to expand below the water table. The government is looking at a more rigorous application regime which will include the 'right to appeal' – a right municipalities do not currently have.

The proposed changes would also help clarify which level of government is regulating the depth of extraction. No one is proposing to relax the rules or remove controls. Everyone agrees the protection of our water resources is paramount. The changes would provide clarity that the operational application process and regulation for pits and quarries is governed by the *Aggregate Resources Act* – as it has been for decades.

Of particular concern in the article is the statement that "if you're extracting below the water table and there's an incident...it's much easier to remediate and clean up before any contaminants get into the aquifers."

This statement perpetuates the myth that aggregate extraction is harmful to water. Quarries and pits that operate below the water table are required by law to mitigate impacts to nearby sensitive features – such as wells, streams and wetlands. No chemicals are involved in the extraction or processing of aggregate materials. It is not correct to imply that some type of 'incident' could occur during aggregate operations that would impact water in this way. Aggregate is a clean industry.

With respect to rehabilitation, aggregate producers are required to rehabilitate progressively – as the material comes out of the ground. Another change being considered in the legislation is a new reporting requirement to better track rehabilitation. While the industry is confident that progressive and final rehabilitation is taking place, this enhanced reporting will help ensure more transparency with respect to rehabilitation. We welcome this proposed new requirement.

The proposed PPS changes also state that rehabilitation can be taken into account when assessing negative impacts of extraction on natural heritage features. This does not compromise the level of protection that is afforded to the Province's natural heritage; the no negative impact standard of protection continues to apply.

What it does do is apply a sensible and balanced approach recognizing that these features often include communities that can be restored and enhanced through effective rehabilitation practices in a reasonable time frame. For example, a pine plantation should be eligible for extraction subject to rehabilitation that can effectively replace or even improve the pre extraction conditions. This type of approach is already contemplated by many progressive planning



authorities (including the Region of Waterloo) and will help sustain availability of close to market aggregate which is another win for the environment.

Ontario's aggregate industry is one of the province's most heavily governed industries. Twenty-five different pieces of legislation and literally dozens of regulations determine where, when and how stone, sand and gravel is extracted. And that's a good thing. Our industry wants to work in partnership with communities, to bring the aggregate that we all use every single day of our lives - to where it's needed in the most environmentally and economically way possible.

Regards,

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