

UPCOMING DATES

FEBRUARY

- 16 Brampton Committee of Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Halton Region Statutory Public Meeting (Development Charges), 9:30 a.m.
- Halton Regional Council, 10:30 a.m.
- Hamilton General Issues Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Mississauga Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Richmond Hill Council Public Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- Whitchurch-Stouffville Council, 3:00 p.m.
- 22 Ajax General Government Committee, 1:00 p.m.
- Aurora Council, 7:00 p.m.
- Brampton Special Council, 7:00 p.m.
- Burlington Special Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Committee, 6:30 p.m.
- Caledon Council, 6:00 p.m.
- Markham Development Services Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Oshawa Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 23 Durham Regional Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Hamilton Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Markham Council, 1:00 p.m.
- Mississauga General Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Richmond Hill Council, 9:30 a.m.



■ HALTON HILLS JOINS CAMPAIGN TO REVIEW MINING OPERATIONS

REASSESSING RESOURCES

Matt Durnan

Town of Halton Hills council has thrown its support behind a campaign that is seeking to put a moratorium on new gravel mining applications in Ontario. But a spokesperson for the aggregate mining industry cautions that given the province's growth targets over the next thirty years, now is not the time to pause approval of new mining operations.

Gravel mining operations across the province extract around 160 million tons of aggregate annually, with that number trending toward 190 million in the next 25 years as Ontario's population is projected to grow by nearly four million.

It takes around 250 tons of aggregate to construct one brick house and around 13,000 tons to build a school. Sand is the most-used natural resource in the world next to water.

Currently there are more than 5,000 gravel pits and quarries in the province, and every year in Ontario another 5,000 acres of land are licensed for gravel mining operations.

The Reform Gravel Mining

Coalition has been leading the charge to press the pause button on gravel mining applications, with spokesperson **Graham Flint** comparing the current system to the Wild West.

"It's out of control. We have a permissive government policy turned over to a capitalistic marketplace to execute and that leads to a proliferation of sites across Ontario," said Flint.

"We don't need all the sites we do; they're dormant, they're excessive, they're not producing at capacity, we don't need it."

Flint made reference to a cluster of gravel operations in Wilmot, in the **Region of Waterloo**, where there are currently seven active operations producing at less than 10 per cent of the aggregate that they're authorized to.

"Collectively they're producing 10 per cent of what

they're allowed to produce, but an eighth person wants to come in and establish an eighth [gravel mining] operation," said Flint.

However, clusters of gravel operations like the one in Wilmot are not uncommon in the industry, according to **Sharon Armstrong**, spokesperson for the **Ontario Sand Stone and Gravel Association**. The association's members extract around 70 per cent of all Ontario-sourced aggregate.

"There's sometimes ... a perception that there's a concentration of sites because aggregate exists where nature put it," said Armstrong. "[However,] it's very common that you're going to have clusters of sites together because that's where the aggregate is."

In the last five years, there

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- Graham Flint

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REASSESSING RESOURCES

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have been 300 gravel extraction licenses surrendered from the industry and the land has been returned for rehabilitation. In that same time frame, the province has issued 77 new licenses for gravel extraction.

“We’re actually surrendering sites at a rate of about three to one,” said Armstrong.

Halton Hills became the first municipality in Ontario to officially put its support behind the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition’s campaign when town council unanimously voted in favour of a motion calling on the province to impose an immediate, temporary moratorium on all new gravel mining applications.

The **Concerned Residents Coalition of Halton Hills** brought the matter to the attention of Halton Hills Mayor **Rick Bonnette**, citing an application for a 100-acre quarry in **Guelph Eramosa Township** that was recently approved.

The quarry was universally opposed by the township but went through the **Local Planning Appeal Tribunal** (now the **OLT**) and was given the go-ahead on appeal.

As few as 10 years ago, the *Aggregates Resources Act* stated that there had to be proof of need for a gravel mining operation. The act was removed

by the Liberal government of the day and Halton Hills mayor Bonnette feels it has become impossible for small communities to oppose gravel mining operations in their backyard.

“They don’t have the resources to oppose these quarries, and it’s almost like the Wild West,” said Bonnette.

The mayor is not opposed to gravel quarries as a whole, but would rather see more checks and balances and consultation when it comes to the approvals process.

It takes an average of 10 years for an aggregate mining site to be approved and licensed, and a moratorium on licensing could prove costly given Ontario’s growth projections for the next quarter century.

“It’s very important not to have a moratorium on this. If we’ve learned anything over the last two years, it’s that disruptions to our supply chains are not good,” said Armstrong.

The environmental impacts of gravel mining can’t be overlooked and rehabilitating these sites is a lengthy process, and in some cases is very hands-off.


Former quarry sites like Christie Pits in Toronto and the **Royal Botanical Gardens** in Burlington are two examples of rehabilitation projects that have

been very successful, though Flint says in many cases, these quarries are merely put through a public safety treatment to decrease the slope to the walls and let the area naturalize.

“There are situations where crops are put back on these lands and they’re put to agricultural use, but a number of experts in this area say that you’ll never restore this land back to what its productivity was before.”

Both the **Ontario Green Party** and the provincial **NDP** have expressed their support for the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition campaign, and Flint says that they are still working to garner support from the **Ontario Liberals**.

Flint and Mayor Bonnette are both hopeful that this matter will be brought into the public eye in the coming months and will become a topic of discussion for all political parties ahead of the June provincial election. 🌱



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