

# 2024



# LOBBY DAY SUMMARY

# OSSGA Lobby Day Summary

Queen's Park was rockin' on April 15th, 2024, as more than 40 members of the Ontario Stone, Sand & Gravel Association held 42 meetings with Ministers, MPPs, Deputy Ministers, senior political staff and key decision makers at the Ontario Legislature.

OSSGA's message was clear: the industry is in crisis. Without faster approvals for new close-to-market aggregate sites, Ontario's ambitious infrastructure plan is in peril. Without aggregate, Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass, the twinning of the Garden City Skyway, the new Ontario Place/Science Centre, the Ontario Line, and the construction of 1.5 million homes will not be possible.

OSSGA's ask was simple: significantly reduce the time it takes to get an aggregate licence approved by the Ontario government. The results:

While members were pleased with the warm welcome, they received in each of their meetings, it was clear that continued effort is required to educate and communicate to politicians and their constituents on the importance of close-to-market, quality aggregate. In addition,

- The need to actively showcase our rehabilitation efforts was mentioned many times throughout the day. Even though the industry has a positive track record at rehabilitation, politicians—both at the provincial and municipal levels—don't really understand the volume of rehabilitation that takes place on an annual basis.
- OSSGA's solution for increasing the levy, which would allow us to address more rehabilitation and road networks, was seen as problematic for many MPPs who viewed the increase in the levy as an increase in taxes. This is not a tactic that the Ford government would support at this time—as it wants to encourage business to invest in a low tax Ontario.
- The day, which culminated in a well attended reception—visited by Ministers including Graydon Smith, Ministers Bethlenfalvy, Tangri and others—was a clear success and one that should be repeated annually!



## Close-to-Market

OSSGA members were armed with facts about the need for close-to-market, high-quality aggregate. Ontario's ambitious infrastructure plans will collectively require four billions tonnes of aggregate by 2040. In the GTHA—the supply of close-to-market aggregate is quickly running out—a message we hammered home.

Reactions to the need for close-to-market aggregate were positive.

- Minister Smith acknowledged that there is a need for close-to-market aggregate.
- Many local MPPs including Brian Riddell representing Cambridge, Sam Oosterhoff from Niagara West, Ric Bresee from Hastings-Lennox & Addington and Ted Arnott from Wellington-Halton Hills showed a strong understanding of the industry and the need for aggregate to build the infrastructure Ontario needs to maintain its place as the economic engine of Canada.
- Some however, including Mike Harris, MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga, acknowledged the push back they receive from constituents and spoke about the

need for enhanced communication and messaging on the extensive rehabilitation work that OSSGA members undertake on an annual basis and that this messaging could lessen opposition to new pits and quarries.

- Michael Lindsay, CEO of Infrastructure Ontario recognized the issue around aggregate quality and the importance of having the right specifications in place for the job - but acknowledged that he needs the industry's help with implementing this.
- Ric Bresee, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Transportation, and others asked if more material could be shipped by rail or barge leading to a discussion around the challenges with port and rail infrastructure, schedules and depots.
- Many members were also appreciative of the information about the different kinds of aggregate, as they had not previously understood that not all aggregate was of the same quality.
- OSSGA's meeting with Matthew Rae, Parliamentary Assistant to MMAH, and MPP for Perth-Wellington, provided an opportunity to discuss Bill 185 and the removal of third-party appeal rights. OSSGA explained to Mr. Rae that should this move forward; producers would no longer be able to appeal Official Plan changes that could seriously impede access to close-to-market material.

## Licensing Times

One of the key asks from OSSGA members to the Ford government was to seriously consider all regulation and legislation to reduce the time it takes to approve a new licence from the current average of 7 to 12 years—down to 4 to 7 years. One solution put forward by OSSGA was to increase the levy—to allow both municipalities and Indigenous Peoples to benefit more directly from aggregate.

This promoted a lot of conversation during our meetings:

- Minister Smith agreed that the municipal Planning Act process is too long, and that the industry needs better relationships with municipalities. He suggested that MNRF and OSSGA develop a strategy to deepen relationships with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—as well as Indigenous Groups.
- Concern was expressed by Minister Smith, as well as several other Ministers and staffers with respect to increasing the levy. Even if the industry is asking for a higher levy, there is reluctance by government to pursue it because they want to be seen as reducing taxes. While OSSGA members understand that the Ford government does not want to be seen as

increasing taxes or fees at this time, OSSGA will continue to work with the government to design creative mechanisms that will flow additional funds to municipalities and Indigenous Peoples to address their concerns on economic fairness.

- Many asked about how red tape could be eliminated, most notably Nina Tangri, Associate Minister for Small Business and Red Tape, and encouraged OSSGA to continue to make submissions to the government on red tape reduction.
- The senior advisor to Minister of Economic Development, Kent Williamson, spoke about regulatory reduction and was concerned about the lengthy and costly licensing process being a barrier to investment for smaller producers. He proposed the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund as an avenue for northern producers who are creating economic opportunities in the region.
- MPP Ric Bresee suggested the development of a checklist to standardize and minimize the length of time for licensing.
- Hon. Todd McCarthy, Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, and MPP for Durham, a very aggregate rich area, asked how many of the 25 pieces of legislation we are subject to were introduced by previous governments.

## Rehabilitation

Many of the individuals OSSGA met with were familiar with the 2023 Auditor General's report on the Management of Aggregates and had questions about rehabilitation and dormant or inactive sites.

- Mike Harris, MPP for Kitchener Conestoga was focused on the idea that dormant sites should be closed, despite the explanations as to why they exist from members. He is even considering a private members bill to further compel producers to do

progressive rehabilitation—which he believes is a 'win-win' as producers are in fact doing the rehab.

- Many members were pleased to hear about the rehabilitation work that members are doing. Even NDP MPP Catherine-Fife from Waterloo spoke about the importance of close-to-market aggregate and the industry's positive rehabilitation practices.
- Minister Tangri, staff from the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and others suggested we educate the public more about rehabilitation.
- Mike Schreiner was interested in hearing about the work the industry is doing with respect to returning extracted land to successful agricultural use.

## Environment

Environmental concerns are always top of mind when speaking about aggregate sites and many participants brought up their concerns in this regard.

- Hon. Andrea Khanjin, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks spoke about the importance of recycling and brought up the potential for a

certification/licensing process for recycled aggregate. There was also discussion on the importance of excess soil for rehabilitation and members explained why MECP needs to work with MNRF to enable them to change their regulations.

- Not surprisingly, OSSGA's meeting with Green Party MPP Mike Schreiner also focused on recycled aggregate as well as the noncompliance issues highlighted in the Auditor General's report. He was pleased the industry wanted to see more inspectors.

- There was also the opportunity to speak with Serge Imbrogno, Deputy Minister of MECP, on some of the more bureaucratic pain points including ‘air’ approvals, inconsistencies in reviewers, aggregate wash ponds and land use planning encroachments on pits and quarries.
- Discussions also took place in many meetings about the need for harmonization between MECP, MNRF and MMAH during licensing and approvals.

In addition to many meetings with local MPPs where we spoke about the importance of close-to-market aggregate and the issues facing them in their constituencies, we also held meetings with:

- The Deputy Minister for Labour, Immigration and Training—where we spoke about labour shortages as well as funding for Safety Workplace Association.
- Director of Policy for Minister Thompson, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Transportation on the OnWeight Database as well as with Finance on the Municipal Property Tax Assessment issue.



## 42 MEETINGS INCLUDING:

- Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
- Hon. Andrea Khanjin, Minister of Environment, Conservation & Parks
- Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier & Minister of Health
- Ivana Yelich, Deputy Chief of Staff and Kevin Lynch, Director of Policy, Office of the Premier of Ontario
- Michael Lindsay, President and CEO, Infrastructure Ontario
- Bonnie Crombie, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
- Deputy Minister, Greg Meredith, Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
- Deputy Minister, Serge Imbrogno, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- MPP Matthew Rae, PA to Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Many other MPPs and political staffers!