

Local man asks, 'Who's in charge here?'

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were going to cause any problems to the environment and to the community?

Surely if a Commission is established by an Act of Government to protect the Escarpment, you would think that this empowered by law to take the necessary steps. But according to a letter to EAGLE (Ecology Awareness Group, Landscape and Environment) from the acting chairman of the Commission, Murray Betts, "the NEC has no authority" to review the conditions under which the existing extraction licences were granted.

In addition, the NEC has been moved under the responsibility of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. This "demotion" indicates that the Government believes, or wants us to believe, that the Plan is completed and it is now a question of application of the Plan within each municipality. In any case, it seems that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is not in charge of the Niagara Escarpment. We read in a letter from the NEC to Vince Kerrio, Minister of Natural Resources: "I suggested to Mr. Gori (copy to you) that you are the appropriate person to contact on this matter."

I found out that the main concern of the Minister of Natural Resources is to make sure that the Aggregate industry can provide Metropolitan Toronto with enough material for sustaining its development. It never occurred to him

that excavating a quarry in between two environmentally sensitive areas (ESA No. 28 and ESA No. 29 of the Regional Plan) is not "sustainable development" and it will not be long before the waters (below and above ground) will be affected and the whole eco-system will be irreversibly destroyed.

So I contacted both Minister of Natural Resources, Vince Kerrio, and the Minister of the Environment, Jim Bradley. Well, by now I understood the rules of the game and I did not expect specific replies to my concerns. Let me quote from a letter from Vince Kerrio to me: "You are quite correct in your observation that today's assessment procedures are far more demanding than they were in 1972 . . . any future proposals for quarrying or waste disposal will be subject to an open comprehensive review process . . ." and concludes directing me for any questions to a Land Supervisor in the Regional District office in Cambridge. In other words, he is not concerned about current and past licences (whether already exploited or yet to be started), but he promises that someone (who knows who) will comprehensively review future applications.

In the meantime I can ask questions to the District office in Cambridge to know how bad things are here in Halton. Thank you, Minister, perhaps if I had a cellular phone I could give them a call while I am driving behind



This view of the escarpment — piles of gravel from the Duff quarry to the left, and the Acton quarry in the background at the right — can be seen from the Fifth Line near the Village of Limehouse.

a line of gravel trucks, every morning, or perhaps I could tell my wife to call them when my three year old boy is startled by the explosions during the day. Perhaps they could even tell me how many millions of gallons of water

they pump away from the bed of the quarry, while my family has serious problems with shortage of water from our well.

I found out from Regional officials of the Ministry of the Environment who came to a meeting in Georgetown organized by the Women's Institute, last October, that they hardly knew the existence of a Niagara Escarpment Plan: "there is no connection between them and the NEC". However, in a letter to me from Jim Bradley, he writes: "My Ministry is also involved in the review of development permits and amendments to the Niagara Escarpment Plan to ensure the protection of the environment, including air, land and water."

Thank you, Minister, for "getting involved" in what should be your main responsibility, but what influence are you going to exercise for the protection of the Escarpment if the NEC is not directly under your responsibility? What action can you direct and which procedures can you impose on them if they do not report to you?

The letter continues: "The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for the issuance of licences . . . I have for-

warded your letter to the Honorable Vince Kerrio, Minister of Natural Resources and John Eakins, Minister of Municipal Affairs. My Ministry will continue to work with both of these Ministries to help to ensure the wise management of the Niagara Escarpment." That is, the Minister responsible for the protection of the environment (in general,) and the "super protection" of the Niagara Escarpment as entrenched in law by the Ontario Government, will work instead for the "wise management" of the Niagara Escarpment.

This suggests to me that he will continue to do what he had done in the past: compromise the environment in and around environmentally sensitive areas of the Escarpment by "wisely" closing an eye and proceeding instead to the satisfaction of the Aggregate industries, the big developers and the garbage dump operators.

Certainly the story, however long, is not complete.

Mr. Gori lives on the Fourth Line close to the Acton Quarry in a naturally beautiful area of the Niagara Escarpment.)

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