

Dufferin ruling called 'devastating'

Two environmental groups are calling the provincial cabinet's recent approval of an expansion of Dufferin Aggregates Milton quarry an "environmentally devastating decision."

Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE) and Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER), the two groups that filed an appeal of the June 2005 joint board approval of the 83-hectare expansion with the cabinet, say at minimum, last Friday's decision means "major disruption to the Escarpment's natural green corridor for many decades."

"It is unconscionable that a government would entrust environmental protection for hundreds or thousands of years to a human-made engineering solution that purports to hold back a wall of water created by mining below the groundwater table—all for the sake of 10 to 12 years of quarrying," said CONE

president Jean Hilborn.

The groups are critical of the cabinet decision to support an amendment to the Niagara Escarpment Plan to add to the plan area some adjacent lands owned by Dufferin.

"There is no way this land swap makes up for the precious natural corridor that will be lost," said POWER president Leslie Adams. "The Niagara Escarpment is supposed to be permanent and continuous, not something to be shoved around to suit a quarry company."

In their appeal to cabinet both CONE and POWER advocated a serious examination of the potential to reduce Ontario society's demand for aggregates through more compact urban development, more public transit and recycling aggregates.

The groups say 25 million tonnes per year of recycled aggregate are used in public sector infrastructure projects in Ontario, and the Dufferin expansion would produce

5.5 million tonnes annually, while recycled sources can provide almost five times as much.

CONE and POWER believe the expansion "offends the very purpose of the Niagara Escarpment Plan."

"Dufferin Aggregates is this government's first big, tough decision about protecting the Niagara Escarpment since coming to power in 2003," said Hilborn. "This quarry decision will generate outrage in the environmental community and with the Ontario public across the greenbelt and beyond."

"The decision on Dufferin Aggregates is an obvious signal that the McGuinty government is abandoning environmental protection as a top priority in the run-up to the October 2007 provincial election," said Adams. "This does not bode well for the government's chances next fall given the justified concern that Ontarians are increasing voicing on environmental issues."



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