

Conservation activists upset over NEC choices

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to The Champion

The Niagara Escarpment Commission will find itself under the proverbial microscope if proposed appointments to their board go through.

That's the warning from 11 Ontario environmental organizations. Under the banner of CONE (Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment), widespread concern has been raised regarding the addition of David Arnill.

Mr. Arnill is a past president of the Aggregate Producers Association of Ontario and continues to sit on their board of directors.

Aggregate is the term used in the industry by those who quarry the Niagara Escarpment to produce gravel for road beds and concrete. There

is a large presence in Milton.

"What concerns us is that a member of a group with a vested interest in harming the escarpment is now becoming a member of the organization that's supposed to protect it," challenges CONE co-president Linda Pim.

Aggregate producers have long favoured the Niagara Escarpment as a source of building materials and, according to CONE, "have resisted land use controls that limit aggregate extraction every step of the way."

Ms Pim also questions the proposed appointment of Jaquelyn Fraser, a member of Environmental Services Group, who represented the Aggregate Producers Association of Ontario in the early 1980s during initial drafting of the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Said Ms Pim, "I think it's safe to say the Ministry of Natural Resources has moved towards a pro-development bias when it comes to NEC appointments."

Disputing this claim, ministry representative Peter Hickey said providing a balance of interest and expertise on the NEC has always been the chief concern.

A communications assistant under Minister John Snobelen, Mr. Hickey added that the NEC also includes past members of CONE as well as the Bruce Trail Association and other environmental organizations.

"The appointment of Mr. Arnill would add a certain expertise and interest that hasn't been included on the NEC," said Mr. Hickey. "We strive for a balance between development inter-

ests and those with conservation slants."

NEC chairperson Don Scott believes it's important to focus on the individual being appointed and not the organization they represent.

While admitting he's had no personal dealings with Mr. Arnill, he's found many aggregate producers to be "just as concerned with good land use planning as environmentalists."

"They (aggregate producers) have matured a lot since the NEC was formed. Many have taken great measures to rehabilitate their pits and quarries," said Mr. Scott.

"And if there was a conflict of interest then that NEC board member would refrain from vot-

• see APPOINTMENT on page 12

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