

# Mayor gets failing grade from NE protection group

By JASON MISNER  
The Champion

Mayor Gord Krantz says he's "not surprised" he's been slapped with an F grade by an environmental watchdog group for his work on the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC).

It's the second time he's received an F from the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE), the first coming in 2000.

"If I supported everything they (CONE) wanted, I would get a good grade," Mr. Krantz said. "If you're not in their agreement, you will get an F every time."

CONE released their report Thursday. It graded each of the eight commissioners who were appointed by the provincial Cabinet to represent the municipalities the escarpment crosses. A total of three municipal members were given an F.

A report card including grades for all 17 commissioners is slated for release in January.

CONE's executive director, Jason Thorne, said Mr. Krantz has voted "in violation of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP)," but noted "legislation doesn't require the commission to follow the plan."

The NEC makes land-use decisions regarding the escarpment.

He said the report was released

deliberately before the November 10 municipal election to give voters information before making their choice. "The people want the escarpment protected and they need to let councillors know that."

CONE identified 17 significant development cases that went before the NEC between April 2000 and October 2003. Mr. Krantz was present for 14 of those decisions and voted against the NEP's provisions for 12 of them.

Decisions regarding Dufferin Aggregates' proposal to expand its quarry and lot severance were highlighted.

Mr. Throne said NEC staff recommended against accepting Dufferin's expansion proposal in September of 2002, but the commission eventually voted in favour of it.

This summer regional council overwhelmingly approved Dufferin's plan to extract more minerals. It will go before a Ministry of Natural Resources and a joint hearing of the Ontario Municipal Board and Environmental Review Tribunal in January for final approval.

Also, an application for a lot severance permit for Springridge Farm was approved by the NEC in September 2001 and was appealed to the Environmental Review Tribunal on behalf of CONE and a local neighbour in January of 2002.

The tribunal turned down the original application, but last December, then-Natural Resources Minister Jerry Ouellette overruled the tribunal's decision and approved Springridge's application. The Town of Milton must still approve the creation of a lot for the existing home to become a legal property, and also approve a building permit for construction of the new home.

Despite being given the F grade, Mr. Krantz defended all of his decisions, saying he uses "common sense" when voting.

"One of the things I've said is I'm not there to rubber stamp (cases). Each case has to be weighed and measured on their own merits."

"Policies and procedures are all well and good, but why do you think there are 17 commissioners? Sometimes you have to deviate from policies and use common sense."

The bottom line, Mr. Krantz said, is the escarpment is a valuable asset and he wants to keep it that way. "The escarpment is very, very important because I was born and raised within the shadow of the escarpment, in Milton Heights. I'm one of the strongest defenders of it, regardless of what CONE thinks."

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