

Stop preferential treatment of aggregate industry

Residents of Ontario continue to raise concerns about the special treatment given to the aggregate industry, yet these concerns are not being addressed in government policy decisions. The recent review of the Aggregate Resources Act did not adequately recognize the concerns raised by the public and impacted local communities.

The special, preferential treatment of the aggregate industry needs to stop. Key pieces of environmental protection legislation include an "exception" clause for the aggregate industry. Big business interests should not take priority over the health, safety and quality of life of rural Ontarians, the environment and prime farmland.

Aggregate producers enjoy exemptions from requirements that apply to other types of development, including exemptions from environmental assessments, exemptions from Class III industrial zoning, promotion of "recycling" of industrial waste on rural extraction sites and reduced setbacks from adjacent residential properties.

The processing of construction demolition waste should not be disguised as "recycling." It is unacceptable that a clause mandating the siting of "recycling facilities" into pits and quarries was added into the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement after the public consultation period had concluded.

"Recycling" facilities, where construction and demolition waste occurs, should be located in lands zoned for industrial operations. They should not be located without appropriate setbacks from other sensitive land uses, including rural homes, schools and open aquifers.

This provincial election has brought out all parties seeking support from rural Ontario. I am calling on all candidates and all parties to stop this preferential treatment of the aggregate industry and to announce their support for a fair, impartial review of aggregate policy if they are elected.

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