



Political Parties Answer Gravel Watch's Question

On September 13th, 2011, Gravel Watch Ontario emailed Ontario's Green, Liberal, New Democratic and Progressive Conservative parties the statement / perspective and question below. We received responses from the Green, Liberal and New Democratic parties, which are posted below. We did not receive a response from the Progressive Conservative party.

We are sending these responses to you for your consideration in deciding your political support in the October 6th provincial election, and for forwarding to your contacts as appropriate.

Best regards,

Ric Holt, President, Gravel Watch Ontario

Gravel Watch's Statement / Perspective:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that Ontario's aggregate policies and regulations are inadequate to protect our communities, farmland, water, heritage resources and environment.

The need for intervention from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in the Flamborough case and the Ministry of the Environment in the Melancthon case indicates the current aggregate policy framework is inadequate to both manage the aggregate industry and protect provincial interests. Efforts by industry and environmental groups to establish new certifications based on best practices also indicate that provincial practices are falling short. Unfortunately the lack of predictability in the application of this supporting legislation and best practices creates uncertainty and risk for host communities, businesses and investors.

A strong, comprehensive and well-enforced aggregate policy framework would eliminate this uncertainty; leading to a healthier, more predictable business environment, and better protection for our communities, farmland, water, heritage resources and environment.

Gravel Watch's Question:

Will your party commit to undertaking a comprehensive and transparent review of the aggregate policy and regulatory framework in Ontario if you were to form the next Provincial Government?

Green Party – From Rebecca Harrison , Director of Communications, via email:

“We are happy to provide our response to your question on this important issue.

Here is our response:

The Green Party is greatly concerned about the expansion of quarries, especially their effect on our water quality, farmland and natural heritage.

Green MPPs will:

- *Complete a comprehensive and transparent review of the aggregate policy and regulatory framework in Ontario,*
- *Change the Ontario Policy Statement to protect prime farmland. Preservation and protection of our farmland, water resources and natural heritage needs to be a high priority in Ontario.*
- *Revise the Aggregate Resources Act to create incentives for more efficient use of aggregates*
- *Support aggregate recycling and stronger site rehabilitation efforts.*
- *Require a full Environmental Assessment for aggregate applications that go below the water or meet the Ministry of Natural Resource's definition of a mega quarry (currently 150,000,000 tonnes)*
- *Increase royalty fees for aggregate extraction to fund stewardship programs*
- *Work with industry and organizations on developing and supporting Socially and Environmentally Responsible Aggregate (SERA) standards in Ontario.”*

Liberal Party – From Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, via letter attached to email:

“Thank you very much for writing on behalf of Gravel Watch Ontario regarding Aggregate policy and reform in Ontario. I am pleased to outline the Ontario Liberal Party's position on the important issues you raised.

Ontario Liberals believe that we can balance our need for aggregates and the need to ensure environmental protection and community health and safety. We recently announced a review of the Aggregate Resources Act, the law that regulates the licensing and operations of aggregate pits and quarries across Ontario. The review will identify where pits and quarries will be allowed to operate. It will balance environmental, community and economic concerns and take into account best practices from other regions.

Throughout the review we will seek input from groups such as Gravel Watch Ontario.

We will also be drawing upon research conducted through the 2010 State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario Study (SAROS), and new voluntary initiatives that have brought together environmental and industry players.

We helped ensure that environmental and community concerns would be fully respected by announcing that an environmental assessment would be applied to the Melancthon quarry. Our review will address a wide range of issues to reduce conflicts between community groups and quarry operations.”

New Democratic Party - From Jeff Andrus, Riding and Policy Support Officer, via email:

“The NDP response is that yes we would support a review of the regulatory framework for aggregates. There is sufficient evidence of a number of problems and deficiencies with current regulation of aggregates (e.g. lack of transparency, inadequate environmental protection, and inadequate government oversight of license applications) that a review is merited.”

Progressive Conservative Party

No response was received.