

# THE HALTON COMPASS

FEBRUARY 14, 2008 • VOLUME 10 • ISSUE 37

## Federal Green Leader talks gravel

BY STUART SERVICE

Over 100 environmentally-minded citizens braved the frigid weather on February 5 to listen to federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May at the Puslinch Community Centre in Aberfoyle when she was the guest speaker at a meeting sponsored by Gravel Watch Ontario.

May, who is on standby for an election battle for the Nova Scotia seat held by high-profile Conservative MP Peter Mackay, fielded quarry questions from her colleagues and citizens alike at the meeting. Raised was the planned expansion of the Acton quarry, which May said needs to be among a list of issues used to change the provincial mindset.

"I'm now not speaking as a federal politician. Just pretend I'm still in Sierra Club or something so I can speak to provincial power and issues," May said, changing hats. "How much more do we have to take of seeing our groundwater threatened, our ecosystems disrupted, the Niagara Escarpment threatened.

"If we could just pull that together into one big push, I think it'll be hard for politicians and province-wide media to ignore it."

May added that whenever the subject of aggregate comes up, "I just keep thinking about Joanie Mitchell - they paved paradise, they put up a parking lot."

Graham Flint, the chair of FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), chimed in to describe an alternative to burrowing craters in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The premise of the green gravel initiative is for politicians to implement policy for new infrastructure, requiring a specific ratio of recycled aggregate with newly harvested gravel.

"Gravel, you can't renew the resource like a tree, but you can take it from places that aren't environmentally sensitive," he said.

Preceding the Q and A session, May spoke elaborately of the changing climate. A 2-degree Celsius fluctuation to the average global temperature is the limit of what the planet can handle. Two doesn't sound like much, May continued, but the difference between the global temperature today and the last ice age was only five degrees. She said current government reduction strategies will still result in green house gas emissions being 27 per cent higher in 2030 than they were in 2005.

"If nothing is done by the year 2030, it would equal an increase of 3 degree Celsius above the global average temperature before the industrial revolution."

At those levels, May said a 4- and 5-degree rise would be inevitable, with Arctic ice shrinking and more ocean real estate taking in sunlight that would otherwise be reflected. An ocean retaining more heat would cause a runaway melt.

There's still time to keep the average at two degrees, May said, if governments can rally to hit the breaks on greenhouse gas emissions by 2015 and compel that statistic to fall back.



Federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May