



# FORCE wants 'green gravel' policies in place

BY DON REDMOND

Political parties in the upcoming Provincial election might find concerns about aggregate applications in the Greenbelt being FORCE-fed to them.

FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), the group fighting the St. Mary's quarry application in Flamborough, recently released a five-point priority paper, pushing their views on "green gravel."

Graham Flint, chair of FORCE, told the Compass that his group is now part of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (OGA), an umbrella organization that takes in some 80 organizations, all of which share similar concerns over environmental protection in the Golden Horseshoe/GTA Greenbelt lands.

Flint said that while he recognizes the need for aggregate, "we're pushing for green gravel - that is, gravel not taken from the Greenbelt lands."

To that end, FORCE in tandem with OGA released a priorities paper entitled, "Green Gravel: Priorities for Aggregate Reform in Ontario."

The five top issues in the paper were: develop and put in place a long term conservation strategy for stone, sand and

gravel - reduce, reuse and recycle; stop new aggregate extraction in the Greenbelt and abutting agricultural land, such as the proposed St. Mary's Flamborough quarry, so that the Greenbelt's important natural features and waters are truly protected forever; redesign the licensing and permit approvals process to make it more fair to the public; develop effective ways to ensure operations and rehabilitation compliance and address personal and environmental health concerns such as carcinogenic dust and greenhouse gas emissions.

Among the other members within the OGA well-known to Halton residents is PERL (Protecting Escarpment Rural Lands), a group co-chaired by noted local musician and environmentalist Sarah Harmer.

"By dealing directly through the OGA with other groups such as PERL, we get a sense of where they sit on the issues and being part of the bigger group takes the game at a higher level," said Flint.

"Aggregates are important to society, used in our homes, schools, hospitals, roads and transit," he added. "But their extraction has inherently detrimental effects on our air, water, climate and quality of life. A finer balance needs to be struck."

As part of the larger Green Gravel campaign, Harmer

noted, "The Green Gravel Campaign hopes to expose long-standing issues that have been kept under the radar of public consciousness. In fact there are more than 25 pieces of legislation and policy that apply to aggregates extraction, and yet there is little to prevent the Greenbelt from being trucked away one load at a time. It's time to take a closer look at how the law is functioning."