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ONTARIO GREENBELT ALLIANCE

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Quarry to Dig Up Greenbelt: Cabinet decision contradicts Liberal government's commitment to the Greenbelt, imposes permanent engineering works, and sets disastrous land-swapping precedent

Toronto, Ontario – The McGuinty Cabinet recently decided to approve a quarry expansion that will harm the environmentally sensitive Niagara Escarpment, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance warned today. The area in question has one of the highest levels of protection within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area, and is included in Ontario's new Greenbelt.

The Niagara Escarpment is a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, an international designation for ecologically significant areas.

“This decision to quarry out the Greenbelt makes us question this government's commitment to protect it,” said Leslie Adams, President of Protect our Water and Environmental Resources (P.O.W.E.R.). “The people of Milton, Halton Hills and all of Ontario need to know that the Greenbelt is under attack and that Cabinet lacks the resolve to follow its own legislation designed to protect Ontarians' quality of life.”

Dufferin Aggregates' proposal expands its mining activities by nearly 70 hectares into Ontario's Greenbelt. The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (OGA) has named Dufferin Aggregates' Milton Quarry expansion as one of the Top 10 Greenbelt Hotspots, areas still under threat and in need of permanent protection. “This is one of the many battles against quarry expansions in the Greenbelt. When added together, these quarries will have a huge negative environmental impact,” said Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director, Environmental Defence. “Such indignities to the Niagara Escarpment and the Greenbelt must stop; the Greenbelt Alliance will be looking for ways forward to prevent the continuing destruction of these protected landscapes.”

In an attempt to sweeten the pill, Dufferin will hand 1,000 acres (405 hectares) of rehabilitated quarry lands over to public ownership. This exchange sends the message to developers that the Greenbelt boundary is a moveable feast.

Last year, the decision by the Consolidated Hearings Board to allow the expansion to go ahead was criticized by two grassroots environmental groups – The Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE) and P.O.W.E.R., both members of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance. They used their appeal right to Cabinet, in the hope of preventing the

destruction of this fundamental part of Ontario's natural landscape. The proposed site is already the home of the infamous "Dufferin Gap", a highly visible gouge blasted out of the cliff face of the escarpment by a quarry company in 1962 – it was this flash point that led to the much-praised protection program for the escarpment, the strength of which is now in question.

To try and mitigate the effects of their expanded quarrying on the groundwater table and on local creeks and wetlands, Dufferin Aggregates has proposed engineering works that will require management and maintenance in perpetuity because of massive physical alterations to the landscape.

"The long term health of the Niagara Escarpment is more important than 15 years of aggregate mining," said environmental lawyer David Donnelly, Legal Counsel for the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance and Environmental Defence. "The Niagara Escarpment and The Great Wall of China both have UNESCO designations, yet the Chinese government wouldn't dare quarry their landmark to make road-beds and sidewalks. Their Great Wall is protected, so why won't our own Ontario Cabinet give the same protection to the Niagara Escarpment?"

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