

## A third option open to MNR

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Dear Editor,

I find myself unsettled by comments from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) concerning the recent application under the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) by St. Marys Cement for a licence to establish a giant quarry in my community.

In the March 13 issue of the *Review*, Dianne Cornish quotes an MNR source as saying that there are two possible outcomes to the ARA application process.

The first of these is that, after due process, the MNR accepts the application and grants the ARA licence to operate the quarry. The second is that issues remain unresolved, and the application is referred to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) for a decision.

In a letter on the same subject to Graham Flint, Chair of FORCE, dated March 4, 2009, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable Donna Cansfield, offers exactly the same two outcomes, issuance of the licence or referral to the OMB.

*'That both the Minister herself, and her spokesperson, failed to even mention denial of the ARA licence as a possibility is very disturbing.'*

Conspicuously and alarmingly missing from either response is a third possibility. The MNR has the legislative authority to simply deny an application under the ARA. Our community has made, and will continue to make, powerful, reasoned and science-based arguments that this quarry proposal should not go forward, and that this application should be denied outright.

That both the Minister herself, and her spokesperson, failed to even mention denial of the ARA licence as a

possibility is very disturbing. This is the same concern that the Environment Commissioner's recent report on "Getting to No" made when it highlighted that the No option must exist for any approval process to have credibility. Without a No option it implies a mindset that elevates the welfare of the aggregate industry above that of the community being asked to host it.

The question then becomes: Does the Ministry of Natural Resources function as a regulator or simply as a facilitator for this powerful industry group?

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