Ottawa, Ontario

October 30, 2023

Environmental Registry of Ontario

Re: <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-6853>

To whom this may concern:

I am a Property Owner of two properties in the province of Ontario.

I am aware that the Government of Ontario, as part of its initiative to prioritize development, proposes to streamline and speed up approvals for industry and construction, by amending the Environmental Protection Act R.S.O. 1990, changing policies that govern the granting of permits, and altering regulations concerning water use and management.

This legislation would loosen controls on the aggregate extraction industry, and would **eliminate** the opportunity for public notification, consultation, input and scrutiny. This is unacceptable to me and my family.

I am personally aware of the increased pressure being placed on local communities, such as Lanark Highlands where I have a property, to move quickly with development applications for the extraction industry **WITHOUT** consideration of local conditions and mandatory sustainable business practices, this being unacceptable. Communities are founded, built and maintained by people – original peoples, the Anishinaabe and Algonquin peoples of our land and the settlers. It is people, the foundation of democracy, who give rights to the businesses to exist in our communities.

**Reporting: Exposure and Disclosure for Investment.** Today, the evidence is out there: Investors and local communities choose and advocate for corporations with sustainable practices, and reporting done in accordance with global standards for financing –per the recommendations of the Task Force For Climate-Related Financial Disclosures, a mandated initiative of the global Financial Stability Board. [Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures | TCFD) (fsb-tcfd.org)](https://www.fsb-tcfd.org/), and reporting per the [IFRS - International Sustainability Standards Board](https://www.ifrs.org/groups/international-sustainability-standards-board/), for which Canadian Standards are being designed [Canadian Sustainability Standards Board (frascanada.ca)](https://www.frascanada.ca/en/cssb).

The Why isn’t the Government of Ontario advocating operational standards that align sustainability with business practices, that respond to local community needs, and are what its professionals in this province are now advocating for?

Thus far, I have not seen any offer from the International and Canadian associations to pay attention to these issues and work with local communities at the outset to manage risks in the public interest. Recent presentations made in Canada show that this is a lagging sector in internal investment to reduce impacts on local communities and climate-related risks. See Foresight Canada – Climate Connections – Mining Edition [Climate Connections: Mining Edition - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz-oiueIEfs)

* **Given this area of investment and attention by the Government of Ontario, I am requesting the new regulations move to accept and current climate-related financial disclosure requirements to enable disclosure of practices and the risks they place in local communities, be they new risks or mitigated risks, and allow for challenge by the global financing experts.**

The Government of Ontario proposals are not in the public interest as they do not mitigate or stop, what we have as intimate scientific and public health knowledge now, of negative impact of extraction industries practices on water tables, on local species who live in the areas, on non-remediating the quarried land in acceptable timelines, and on people’s habitats: increased local earth based disasters (landslides, earthquakes, sinkholes and sinking properties), increased dust from uncovered quarries, and increased anxiety due to noise and 24 hr per day business operations.

The Government of Ontario proposal includes no public notification, consultation and input- With the period for public consultation dropped from the application process, the “qualified person’s” assessment would not be subject to scrutiny by landowners, interested citizens, or local levels of government.

This practice goes counter to a worldwide interest and curiosity in increasing public participation and engagement, the core to deep democracy. I am requesting that the Government of Ontario adopt the Core Values for such public participation which have been advocated by the International Association of Public Participation, [About Us - International Association for Public Participation (iap2.org)](https://www.iap2.org/page/about), of which there is an active Canadian Branch. The Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation are:

**Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation**

* Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
* Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
* Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
* Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
* Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
* Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
* Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

These projects are complex: to date, appeals show that there are challenges in determining acceptable proposal design: Many stakeholder lenses are needed given the increased population of Ontario, the public health requirements, climate change related risks and the attention paid to increasing the declining numbers of endangered species.

Every quarry is a significant development in a local community. The complexity of their proposals and the courageous conversations that are needed locally are not referenced in the following proposed process of the Government of Ontario: For example:

* With the expansion of the existing “permit-by-rule framework” already used in some industries, the aggregate industry would self-register for a permit to initiate a project through the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry (EASR), and would be allowed to start work immediately, without any public consultation, and without the current process of oversight by various government ministries
* Any activity could proceed either by meeting a set out list of criteria (rule based EASR) OR by providing a technical assessment of the project by a ***qualified person***(assessed EASR), to demonstrate that the activities of the project would meet standards for environmental outcomes set out by the province.

In response to the following aspects to the proposals:

* **Less frequent** i**nspections** - While the Ministries would maintain the authority to “inspect facilities” and “ensure compliance with regulatory requirements”, we currently see dramatically reduced levels of staffing in the MNRF and MECP; we observe that already existing requirements for monitoring pit operations and inspecting sites are not being fulfilled; shortening the timeline between the issuance of a permit and beginning site work would put even greater pressure on inspectors.
	+ **In light of known government constraints for inspections, I am requesting that a baseline for frequency of inspections be set that integrates training for local communities such that local community monitoring and inspection be integrates– such as the Canadian Wildlife Service does for the birding population; and**
	+ **That the inspections take place throughout a quarry development process of quarry management, which includes exploration, development, early production, full production and reclamation**.
* **Unlimited water taking** - Ontario proposes removing the current limit of 400,000 litres of groundwater per day.
	+ **In light of the increasing negative water experiences that affect the public health in Ontario as it pertains to groundwater and above ground water, namely drought and contaminated water, I am requesting that the current limit of 400,000 litres of groundwater be maintained, and that**
		- **The current limit be reviewed by an independent committee for the proposals based on the geographical area, acknowledging that some areas may require a reduction in the limit; and that**
		- **Further this limit be reviewed by an independent committee and updated to take into account evolving climate change risk every 5 years.**
* **Sidelining Conservation Authorities**-  In this situation where assessment and oversight are needed more than ever,  the Conservation Authorities’ staff at the local level continue to be prohibited from any oversight of water resources and wetlands impacted by the aggregate extraction industry.
	+ **In light of the importance of this industry in local communities and impact on local water tables, biodiversity and local development plans, I am requesting that the Conservation Authorities be a key stakeholder in all conversations held at the local community, Municipal Council, consultations with Indigenous Populations and Provincial engagements and consultations with any issues throughout a quarry development process of quarry management, which includes exploration, development, early production, full production and reclamation.**

I am requesting to be apprised of and kept informed of what transpires with the Government of Ontario’s proposals.

Thanking you in advance

Sincerely,

Ottawa, Ontario