



Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

A national faith-based organization founded in support of Unitarian values

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The Hon. Stephen Harper,
Prime Minister of Canada,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

The Hon. Peter Kent
Minister of the Environment
Government of Canada,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper and Minister Kent:

I am writing to tell you that many Unitarians in Ontario and across Canada are deeply concerned about the proposed limestone mega quarry by Highland Companies and funded by the Baupost Hedge Fund. This is a federal concern because it impacts strongly on the fish habitat in the Pine River and a thorough environmental assessment based on the Fisheries Act should be done before any project like this could be approved.

The business leaders of our world seem to think, these days, that the larger the project, the better it is. From an environmental perspective massive industrialized projects are a total disaster. They completely destroy whole ecosystems and cause far more environmental damage than anyone can imagine in advance.

- This project will demolish 2316 acres of prime farm land now used to grow potatoes and vegetables. What consequence would such a devaluation of farmland have on Ontario's food sovereignty and security?
- It will carelessly demolish whole sections of the Pine River, eliminating fish habitat and habitat for other animals, possibly including the bobolink. (A threatened species.) David Suzuki's report challenges the scientific basis of claims made by the industry, and suggests there is important fish habitat to study, assess, and protect. The report of the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority gives a list of actions which need to be taken to protect the fish habitat on the Pine River.
- The mining process will affect the people and wildlife in Melancthon Township, Dufferin County, including the area surrounding the community of Guelph. According to the Council of Canadians:

“Below the proposed quarry lies the Amabel-Lockport-Guelph aquifer that forms the headwaters of five major river systems ...- that are important drinking water sources for more than a million people. The quarry would blast 60 metres (deeper than Niagara Falls) beneath the water table and use approximately 600 million litres of water per day. The company plans to pump that water - collected daily on the open pit mine floor, and likely now contaminated with blasting residue and diesel fuel - back into the wells around the quarry.”

- It will industrialize a peaceful, rural landscape right next to a UNESCO World Heritage site (The Niagara Escarpment), bringing air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, and massive amounts of heavy vehicle road traffic to the area.
- Danny Beaton, Turtle Clan Mohawk, speaks for the terrible loss of habitat for many species:

“...the location of this Mega Quarry is near the headwaters of SEVEN major river heads, being: The Grand River, Pine, Nottawasaga, Saugeen, Noisy, Boyne, and the Mad River. Beneath these rivers lay the pure flowing aquifers that are the drinking sources to surrounding towns and cities for more than a million people and natural wildlife. ...The quarry is so negative it would permanently alter the headwaters of the rivers, within which many species depend upon, eg.: fox, coyote, wolf, beaver, lynx, rabbit, deer, ducks, geese, turkey, pike, pickerel, trout, salmon, turtles, salamanders, snakes, and many others who thrive & rely upon these rivers. ...[W]e, as human beings, are their voice and protectors.”

To the best of my knowledge, no environmental assessment has been performed to determine the extent of the damage that will be done and whether or not the total destruction of an ecosystem in a 2300 acre area (with plans to expand that to 7200 acres) is within Canadian law. No expectations have been laid out to this company to protect the fish. This is the job of the Federal Department of the Environment.

As a Unitarian Minister, I call on you to make economic decisions with respect for the earth which supports and sustains all life. As a Canadian citizen, I expect the Federal Government to take steps to evaluate industrial projects, to conduct environmental assessments that are independent from industry, and to staff our Department of the Environment with enough capacity to enforce the law. This project should not be approved without a full Federal Environmental assessment under the Fisheries Act.

Sincerely yours

Rev. Frances Deverell
President,
Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice