



**Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice**

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

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President, Rev. Frances Deverell

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August 10, 2011

The Hon. Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Bldg.  
Queen's Park,  
Toronto M7A 1A1

The Hon. John Wilkinson,  
Minister of the Environment,  
Province of Ontario,  
11th Floor, Ferguson Block  
77 Wellesley Street West  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2T5

Dear Premier McGuinty and Minister Wilkinson:

I am writing to tell you that many Unitarians in Ontario and across Canada are deeply concerned about the limestone mega quarry proposed by Highland Companies and funded by the Baupost Hedge Fund. This is a provincial concern because there are so many ways in which an important rural area of Ontario near the Niagara Escarpment will suffer both environmental and cultural damage.

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. They 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 Ontario law, or to Ontario's ultimate benefit. No expectations have been laid out to this company to protect the fish, the rivers, the aquifer and ground water, or the air. What steps have been taken to protect the quality of community life in the area, including the community's right to good water?

Is this how you treat an important rural constituency in the heartland of Ontario?

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 citizen of Ontario, I expect the Provincial 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 Provincial Environmental assessment. I am shocked to read that for such a project, it is not automatically required.

Sincerely yours

Rev. Frances Deverell  
President,  
Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

cc

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