



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Pitfalls in Greenbelt Protection Unearthed**

*Provincial parties challenged to reform stone, sand and gravel legislation and adopt North America's first Green Standard for gravel*

**Toronto, Ontario** – A new Greenbelt priorities paper, released today by the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, highlights the environmental effects of aggregate extraction and makes the case for provincial reform of this unsustainable land use.

Aggregate extraction is essentially open pit mining. With it, comes all kinds of ecological injustices, including threatening already endangered species, fragile forests and wetlands; taking massive amounts of drinking water; releasing harmful pollution to our air from thousands of truck journeys per day; and leaving permanently scarred landscapes. All this is happening in and just beside Ontario's protected Greenbelt, 1.8 millions acres of green space, farmland and natural areas in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region.

"You wouldn't expect this kind of environmental devastation in the pride of Ontario – our Greenbelt," said Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director, Environmental Defence.

In response to the ever increasing numbers of proposed gravel pits and quarries which threaten the integrity of the Greenbelt, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance has launched its **Green Gravel Campaign** with a new paper – *Green Gravel: Priorities for Aggregate Reform* – directed to the provincial government and all political parties. Despite the Greenbelt designation, quarries continue to be proposed and approved in environmentally significant areas including farmland, escarpment and moraine.

"The Green Gravel Campaign hopes to expose longstanding issues that have been kept under the radar of public consciousness," said Sarah Harmer, Co-Chair, Protecting Escarpment Rural Land (P.E.R.L.). "In fact there are more than 25 pieces of legislation and policy that apply to aggregates extraction, and yet there is little to prevent the Greenbelt from being trucked away one load at a time. It's time to take a closer look at how the law is functioning."

On top of the immediate impact of quarries on Greenbelt lands, there are other issues of concern that need addressing: the rights and interests of First Nations, climate change, protection of our water, and protection of viable farmland.

“Ontario has an opportunity to lead the way in setting a groundbreaking green standard for this industry,” said Penny Richardson, President, Coalition of Concerned Citizens (CCC).

In its priority paper, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance makes several key recommendations:

1. Develop and put in place a long term conservation strategy for aggregates (stone, sand, gravel and shale) – reduce, reuse, recycle.
2. Stop new aggregate extraction in the Greenbelt and abutting agricultural land.
3. Redesign licensing and permit approvals to make it fair to the public.
4. Develop effective mechanisms for operations and rehabilitation compliance – the industry currently monitors itself.
5. Address personal and environmental health concerns – carcinogenic dust and carbon dioxide.

“Aggregates are important to society, used in our homes, schools, hospitals, roads and transit,” said Graham Flint, Chair of Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE). “But their extraction has inherently detrimental effects on our air, water, climate and quality of life. A finer balance needs to be struck.”

**About the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance:** The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance is a diverse multi-stakeholder coalition of more than 80 organizations who share a common vision for protecting and expanding the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. Environmental Defence is the coordinator of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance. [www.greenbelt.ca](http://www.greenbelt.ca).

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