

Hon. Michael Chong, M.P.
Wellington-Halton Hills



CANADA

L'hon. Michael Chong, député
Wellington-Halton Hills

July 25, 2011

The Honourable Peter Kent, P.C., M.P.
Minister of the Environment
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
10 Wellington Street, 28th Floor
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H3

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Dear Minister,

I am writing to express the deep concern that I share with my constituents regarding the Highland Companies' proposal to develop an aggregate quarry in the Township of Melancthon.

The Highland Companies have proposed the development of one of the largest open-pit quarries in Canada. This open-pit quarry would extend over an area of 2,500 acres and result in a significant loss of prime natural habitat, eliminating local flora and fauna, potentially including species on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*. The Highland Companies' proposal would result in the permanent loss of land that provides refuge to the Henslow Sparrow and Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), both of which have been classified either federally under *SARA* or provincially by the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (CASSARO).

The proposed quarry would also affect the Nottawasaga and Grand River Watersheds as it would delve more than 200 feet below the surface, and may have a deleterious effect on the fish habitat in these watersheds. This open-pit quarry would disrupt the Pine River, which is a subwatershed of the Nottawasaga Watershed and supports coldwater fisheries with naturally reproducing native Brook Trout. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have expressed concern as coldwater fisheries are highly sensitive to environmental changes such as the hydrogeological amendments proposed by the Highland Companies. The harmful and deleterious impact of this open-pit quarry on fish and fish habitat undoubtedly warrants the trigger of a federal Canadian environmental assessment under the *Fisheries Act*.

In addition, the development of this quarry may negatively impact the groundwater of one million Canadians who are downstream and served by these watersheds. It may also adversely impact the international transboundary waters of Lake Huron and Lake Erie, into which the Nottawasaga and Grand River Watersheds drain. The Grand River is situated within the largest watershed in Southwestern Ontario, and it has been designated by the Government of Canada as a Canadian Heritage River. As such, the Grand River is a significant component of Canada's biodiversity and this proposal by the Highland Companies would result in its considerable degradation. Furthermore, the proposed quarry would impede navigation in the Pine River, thereby triggering a federal environmental assessment under the *Navigable Waters Protection Act*.

AUG 18 2011

8

Experts from the David Suzuki Foundation have reviewed the Highland Companies' technical environmental report and noted that it is incomplete in its assessment of the impact on fish habitat and species at risk. They have also questioned the claim that the quarry will allow for improvements in surface and groundwater features in the area. Experts from the Grand River Conservation Authority believe that there may be a significant impact extending upgradient some kilometres away from the quarry, affecting the Grand River Watershed. Furthermore, a preliminary review by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority of the proposed quarry found a number of significant issues concerning the applicant's assessment of the quarry's potential impact on natural terrestrial features, surface and groundwater quality, as well as an incomplete inventory of flora, fauna and fish.

The Highland Companies' proposed aggregate quarry would result in a deleterious impact on federal species at risk, fish and fish habitat, flora and fauna, as well as surface and groundwater features. I am requesting a federal environmental assessment under the *Fisheries Act* and *Navigable Waters Protection Act*, and I urge you to utilize your authority to refer this proposal to a federal review panel due to the immense amount of public concern.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely,



Michael Chong

cc: His Worship Bill Hill and Council, Township of Melancthon
Warden Chris White and Council, County of Wellington
Her Worship Joanne Ross-Zuj and Council, Township of Centre Wellington
Mr. David Tilson, Member of Parliament, Dufferin-Caledon
Ms. Sylvia Jones, Member of Provincial Parliament, Dufferin-Caledon
Mr. Ted Arnott, Member of Provincial Parliament, Wellington-Halton Hills
Chair Jane Mitchell, Grand River Conservation Authority
Chair Walter Benotto, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority
President Larry R. McGratton, Friends of the Grand River
President Terry Boehm, National Farmers Union
President Bette Jean Crews, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
President Henry Stevens, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
President David Parker, Wellington Federation of Agriculture
President Bill Blackwell, Ontario Federation of Anglers Hunters