

Noise, traffic and peaceful co-existence



June 18, 2019

By Nate Smelle

Hastings County council sent a strong message to the residents of North Hastings this morning by voting 11-3 to approve the zoning bylaw amendment allowing the Freymond/Fowler quarry in Faraday to move forward. The main message sent ? that Hastings County, like our license plates will soon say, is open for business. In a recent report from No Place For A Quarry economist Dr. Peter Tomlinson regarding the economic impact of the quarry on the community, he indicated that the prognosis for regulatory mitigation of the aggregate industry by the provincial government may be worsening. Tomlinson highlighted the government of Ontario's new direction by pointing to a recently announced ?aggregates reform? initiative on its website which states that ?We're engaging our partners to identify ways we can cut red tape, create jobs, and build a sustainable aggregates industry.? As the limited ?red tape? allegedly holding up the aggregate industry disappears along with regulations protecting Ontario's water and species-at-risk, we can expect more exploitative industrial developments such as the Freymond/Fowler quarry popping up in our backyards. While the Ford government continues to hum its ?open for business? mantra, revenues generated by the tourism industry in a relatively sustainable manner in the past will dry up as the resource sector strips away the natural capital that once encouraged tourism to thrive. What we are seeing in Ontario now is the replacement of comparably environmentally-sound economic growth for the sake of short-term profit. A trade-off of long-term strategic planning for a short-sighted vision of the future. On the Hastings County website tourism is described as ?a vital component of our local economy,? which attracts 2.58 million visitors every year, with total annual tourist spending estimated at more \$260 million. It states further that approximately \$80 million of that is ?labour income,? supporting 2,500 part-time, full-time and seasonal jobs. The website also boasts that more than 340 businesses in Hastings County are directly involved in the tourism industry, and nearly 100 businesses are indirectly impacted by tourism. Of course the local tourism industry will still remain a major element of the county's economy, however, if the county continues choosing to promote resource-depleting industrial uses of land in North Hastings over tourism there will be no reason for people to reside or visit here. Why would anyone leave the noise and traffic of the city to experience the same type of noise and traffic elsewhere? The Freymonds have attested publicly on numerous occasions that they are committed to the community by providing jobs, supporting local charities and initiatives, while operating their business in an environmentally responsible manner that respects their neighbours. They say the proposed quarry will be no different, however I have yet to meet a single neighbour who supports this development. My position on the quarry has been clear for some time now. No matter how I crunch the numbers, in my opinion this development will do more harm than good. By sharing my position on the quarry I have found that there are far more people who agree that this particular location is indeed no place for a quarry. I do not dispute the value of the support the Freymonds provide to the community, but considering the number of No Place For A Quarry signs in their neighbourhood and along Hwy 62 on the road to Bancroft, I cannot see how they will be able to peacefully co-exist with their neighbours. At first, when I started writing on this

issue in 2015, there were a handful of people supporting the quarry willing to share the reasons for their support. Since I began sharing my own perspective on the matter in this editorial column these voices have gone silent. Getting a hold of one of the proponents by phone earlier this year, they told me that they wouldn't talk to me because they didn't want to speak with anyone who had an opinion. Well, in my opinion the first step towards peaceful co-existence with our neighbours requires open ears and understanding of each others' perspectives. As long as those who believe the quarry will benefit the Bancroft area will not listen to those who believe the opposite, peaceful co-existence is not possible.