January 19, 2010

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

I am a private citizen and a ratepayer in the Township of Melancthon, in the County of Dufferin.

One of the biggest environmental disasters is happening in our own back yard and threatens the water source for your community. The Highland Companies is proposing a 2,400 acre, 200 foot open pit limestone mine situate on the headwaters of the Nottawasaga and Grand Rivers in Melancthon Township in the County of Dufferin on prime agricultural land. This application will be the largest initial application ever made in Ontario. All water runs downhill from there and everyone should be very concerned.

The dewatering proposal put forth by the company at their open house in July 2009 is to build a cement wall inside the hole and run massive pumps 24/7 to dewater the mine. They liken it to your sump pump in your basement. And when questioned as to who would “sustain” the pumps and maintain the cement wall to keep the water out of the hole after they are finished “mining” their own consultants stated it would be whoever owned the property.

This company is promising 400 jobs and economic prosperity the likes of which we have never seen before! Politicians seem to be accepting this at face value. When Highlands was questioned at their July 2009 open house, their consultants confirmed these jobs would NOT all be local jobs nor are they permanent jobs.

In all their literature and public statements, this company maintains they “plan” to rehabilitate the land to agriculture. At their July 2009 meeting their consultants determined that tender fruit trees at the bottom of this massive hole would be feasible. A spokesperson from the Ontario Sand and Gravel Association and an OMAFRA representative, however, both confirmed that in fact if the hole is so massive it is simply left to fill with water and there is no expectation that rehabilitation has to occur.

Every single person who relies on water from the headwaters of the Nottawasaga and Grand River, (more than 1 million Ontarians) on which this open pit mine will be situate WILL potentially be impacted in some way by this proposal. This issue should be on every single Council agenda in the Nottawasga and Grand River watersheds for discussion and information purposes every meeting. It will certainly be an election issue in October 2010.

When the farmland is gone, the water compromised and the limestone mined there will be nothing left. The only true sustainable industry is agriculture. It has sustained itself for centuries, and works in harmony with the environment.

The apparent short sightedness of local politician’s regarding the proposed rail sale and the thoughts of someone buying them a $15 million YMCA seems to overshadow their concern over their ratepayers (and more than 1 million Ontarian’s) drinking water is astounding.

Your neighbours in Melancthon and Mulmur need your help to help protect the water source for your community. Politicians, please stand up and be heard on this issue. Go to www.ndact.com for information and call and write your political colleagues in Dufferin and express your concern about this issue. This is NOT a local issue, this is an issue that will impact your community if it proceeds.

Sincerely,

Karren Wallace