

**Coalition demands Ontario halt new gravel mining approvals  
to address crisis revealed by Auditor General**

(Toronto, Ontario) The Reform Gravel Mining Coalition (RGMC) is calling on the Ontario government to safeguard lives and the environment by introducing an immediate moratorium on new aggregate approvals, in order to implement the recommendations presented by the Auditor General in the Value-for-Money Audit of the Management of Aggregate Resources, published on December 6, 2023. In a statement, the coalition of impacted community groups said: “The Auditor General exposes an alarming truth: that the management of aggregate resources is in crisis, and the province is failing to protect the public from the negative impacts of gravel mining. The Ontario government must pull the emergency brake and halt new approvals until it can guarantee public safety by enforcing the Auditor General’s commonsense proposals.”

The Auditor General concludes that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) is “falling short” in its duty to “minimiz[e] the impacts of aggregate operations, particularly through its role in regulating the industry to ensure approval holders comply with all necessary requirements.” “Shockingly” low rates of inspection and enforcement demonstrate a pattern of regulatory failure that has enabled widespread violations in the aggregate industry to persist unchecked, said RGMC. For example, the Auditor found that three quarters of aggregate inspectors checked less than 5% of the operations in their district. Up to 64% of aggregate companies are violating regulations; however, inspectors referred less than 1% of non-compliant companies for an investigation that could lead to a charge.

In response to the audit’s findings, David Donnelly, the environmental lawyer who represents RGMC communities, said: “The aggregate industry has long claimed to be well-regulated; the Auditor General has disproved this long-standing claim—it simply isn’t true.” David Jeffery, President of Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition and member of the RGMC Steering Committee, added: “The Auditor General reveals the true face of Ford’s open for business approach. The province has given the industry a free hand to operate as it pleases, leading to a ‘gravel rush’ that benefits big corporations at the expense of communities, municipalities and our quality of life in Ontario.”

The Auditor General confirms what many impacted communities report: that aggregate extraction can cause significant “negative impacts” to lives and the environment. The Auditor states that gravel mining can “alter or destroy woodlands, grasslands, wetlands or farmland”; “pose a risk to local groundwater resources”; and cause serious health impacts from air pollution and heavy truck traffic. Additionally, sand, stone and rock are non-renewable resources that provide important ecosystem services.

The Ontario government's failure to enforce aggregate regulations "jeopardizes the fundamental resources—water, food, and air—that sustain life in Ontario," said the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition. The Coalition characterized this risk as "entirely unnecessary," since existing aggregate reserves in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region are sufficient to meet demand for the foreseeable future, according to the Ministry's most recent supply and demand study cited by the Auditor General.

The Reform Gravel Mining Coalition called on municipalities to join the demand for reform by saying no to new gravel mining applications and passing resolutions demanding a provincial moratorium on new gravel mining approvals. "For too long, municipalities, First Nations, and taxpayers have borne the economic, social and environmental costs of gravel mining," the statement said. "The Auditor General's exposé of the crisis in aggregate management empowers local decision-makers and constituents across Ontario to say no to new pits and quarries in their communities."

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**Background:**

The Gravel Mining Reform Coalition (RGMC) brings together resident groups that defend lives and the environment from the devastating impacts of gravel mining in Ontario. RGMC supports the long-term goal of winning regulatory and legislative reforms that safeguard health, water, and nature, ensure community participation, and honour treaties and obligations with First Nations.

In January 2022, RGMC launched the Demand A Moratorium Now (DAMN) campaign to demand the province impose a moratorium on all new gravel mining approvals, with the aim of charting a more sustainable path forward for aggregate extraction. Since the launch of the campaign, 20 municipalities in Ontario—including those with the highest volume of aggregate extraction in the province within their borders, such as Caledon, Halton Hills and Milton—have also expressed support for a moratorium through municipal resolutions.

For more information on the DAMN Campaign and to see the full list of municipalities that support a moratorium, please visit: <https://www.reformgravelmining.ca/damn-campaign>.