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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **2014 PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT THREATENS HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT, FARMLAND, COMMUNITIES**

Gravel Watch Ontario, a coalition of Ontario community and environmental groups, is alarmed by provisions in the 2014 *Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS) that promote reprocessing of toxic industrial waste in aggregate sites. “These proposed changes, inserted at the eleventh hour, pose a serious threat to public health, farmland, the environment and rural communities,” says Ric Holt, President of Gravel Watch.

The clause promoting the location of recycling facilities in pits and quarries did not appear in any of the government documents presented during the public consultation on the PPS; including eighteen regional workshops and two Environmental Bill of Rights registry postings. “To add this clause just prior to publication, without any public consultation, is completely unacceptable”, said Holt. “Recycling of aggregate materials can be a good thing, and is important in conserving the resource. But it’s a major industrial land use with significant negative impacts, and should only be located on lands appropriate for Class III Industrial use. Many materials being reprocessed contain toxic waste. The stone, sand and gravel are contained in construction and demolition waste, concrete, asphalt, shingles, toilets and other materials. These materials should be carefully controlled and never be processed in sensitive locations.”

Gravel Watch is concerned with the “Trojan Horse” aspect of siting industrial waste reprocessing in pits and quarries. The industry justifies locating extraction operations on farmland, close to the water table, and near communities, on the basis that aggregate can only be extracted where it’s naturally located. Extraction is classified as an interim land use: the premise is that operators go in, remove the material, rehabilitate the land and get out. The duration of the impacts should be limited. “Once you introduce waste processing to the equation, you completely change the game,” insists Holt. “When a company is generating profits from recycling, there’s a disincentive to completing extraction and rehabilitating the land. Instead, the incentive is to turn rural lands into permanent industrial sites.”

Cheryl Connors, Gravel Watch Director, raises serious concerns over the threat to human health posed by inappropriate siting of aggregate operations. “Dust, fine particulate matter, diesel emissions and airborne silica from extraction sites are proven human health hazards. They contribute to asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and even cancer,” notes Connors. “The emissions from reprocessing facilities can be even worse. You wouldn’t allow other industrial facilities with these impacts where they would impact nearby residents, schools and communities. It can’t be justified simply because it’s convenient and profitable for the operator.”

Waste reprocessing in pits and quarries will expose sensitive environmental features such as the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine to substantial negative impacts. Recycling operations on aggregate sites are normally located at the lowest point, close to or into the water table. Gravel Watch Director Dr. Larry Jensen, retired geoscientist with the Ontario Geological Survey, points to potential impacts on farmland and the environment. Open-air processing of fly ash, concrete and mine waste releases toxins into the environment. “Processing should take place far from the water table, where contamination can be monitored before it spreads. If contamination occurs too close to water table, it’s virtually impossible to catch the problem and remove the toxins before they enter the groundwater and farmland.” Jensen adds, “The government should have learned from experiences at places like Walkerton and Elmira. It appears they have not.”

Holt says, “We strongly recommend the government conduct a thorough independent study on the potential impacts of waste reprocessing in pits and quarries.” Gravel Watch Ontario encourages Ontarians to contact their local Members of Provincial Parliament, to urge them to more fully consider the impacts before implementing the Provincial Policy Statement.

*Gravel Watch Ontario is a coalition of citizens and non-government organizations, seeking to improve the management of aggregate in Ontario. Gravel Watch Ontario acts in the interests of residents and communities to protect the health, safety, quality of life of Ontarians, and the natural environment. For more information, visit <http://www.gravelwatch.org>.*

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## Fact Sheet / Background

### The Case for Recycling:

- Annual consumption of mineral aggregate resources (stone, sand and gravel) in Ontario is relatively consistent at 160-170 million tonnes. Aggregates are an important and finite, non-renewable resource.
- Approximately 7% of the aggregate consumed in Ontario is derived from recycled material. The corresponding percentage in the United Kingdom is approximately 21%.
  - If Ontario matched U.K. figures, twenty-four million tonnes of virgin aggregates would be saved annually, and the life of available reserves would be significantly extended. (Visual: A savings of twenty-four million tonnes represents enough aggregate to fill a line of gravel trucks, bumper-to-bumper, over 10,000 km. long.)

### 2014 Provincial Policy Statement (section 2.5.2.3, page 27):

- <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=10463>
- Section 2.5.2.3 states, “Mineral aggregate resource conservation shall be undertaken, including through the use of accessory aggregate recycling facilities within operations, wherever feasible.”
- The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is the statement of the government's policies on land use planning. It is an extremely powerful document that is issued under section 3 of the Planning Act, and all decisions affecting land use planning matters “shall be consistent with” the Provincial Policy Statement.
- The PPS is developed without legislative review, can take precedence over legislation, and requires municipal plans to conform. Because of this extraordinary power, Ontarians should be vigilant of changes to the PPS and any potential lack of rationale behind them.
- PPS 2014 was undertaken in 2010 and published on January 29, 2014 and will come into effect on April 30, 2014.

### The Case for Caution in Siting Recycling (Waste Reprocessing) Facilities:

- Concerns presented in the attached release, and further:
- Among the materials allowed by Ministry of Natural Resources’ policy for reprocessing within pits and quarries are fly ash, mine waste, asphalt and concrete; all normally containing high concentrations of heavy metals and toxic elements. These include arsenic, boron, cadmium, chromium, nickel, cobalt, lead, manganese, mercury, molybdenum, selenium, thallium and vanadium along with dioxins and many other pollutants hazardous to the environment, vegetation, human and animal health, and ecosystems.
- Ministry of Environment Guideline 3272e D-6 calls for minimum separation of 1000 metres between Class III Industrial facilities and sensitive land uses (residences, schools, hospitals, etc.). Aggregate recycling facilities meet Class III criteria: “processing and manufacturing with frequent and intense off site impacts and a high probability of fugitive emissions”.
- European recyclers are increasingly moving towards large enclosed facilities, or small facilities located on industrial lands. At Europe’s largest recycling plant, in Amsterdam, the state-of-the art plant is entirely enclosed to protect the surrounding environment.

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