

Recommendations for Changes to the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) & Underlying Policies (2019)

1. Invoke a "Food and Water First" policy. This requires protection for prime farming soils (classes 1-3) and source water protection. Aggregate should not be mined at the expense of local food and fresh water. As a province and as a nation, we must be able to feed ourselves.
2. Make conservation of aggregate, a non-renewable resource, a priority over approval of new extraction sites. Conservation can occur through aggregate recycling and use of alternative materials. All three levels of government need to be encouraged to use recycled product.
3. Reserve virgin aggregate, a non-renewable resource, for use within Canada.
4. Prohibit aggregate extraction below the water table without a full Environmental Assessment and full understanding of the impact on all areas, near and far.
5. Prohibit aggregate extraction below the water table in drinking water source areas.
6. Conduct a thorough study of all existing aggregate reserves in Ontario. We cannot know what we need until we know what we have.
7. Require that new aggregate proposals demonstrate need for additional resource extraction in meeting the demands of the Ontario market.
8. Mandate that an Environmental Assessment occur for all new or expanding aggregate operations.
9. Develop a process and guidelines for identifying and designating new Specialty Crop Areas to safeguard unique agricultural land resources. Prohibit aggregate extraction in Specialty Crop Areas.
10. Develop a comprehensive "Aggregate Master Plan" and disallow new aggregate mining licenses within environmentally protected spaces until the "Aggregate Master Plan" has been fully approved by the people and the province. Align the "Aggregate Master Plan" with existing environmental protection legislation including but not limited to the Greenbelt, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine.

11. Provide an assessment of the cumulative effects (dust, noise, air quality, traffic emissions, effects on water, etc.) of industrial projects including operations existing and anticipated in the "Aggregate Master Plan" on Ontario residents by district and take those impacts into account in the decision-making process.
12. Full cost accounting: Realign the cost of virgin aggregate to reflect reality. Economically, aggregate is a low-priced, heavy-weight commodity that takes the bulk of its cost from transportation. Today, however, the price of virgin aggregate must include the activism necessary by residents to fight for their best interest despite the elected and public institutions designed to represent and protect the public interest. As well, the cost must encompass the environmental cost on residents. In other words, the market cost for virgin aggregate is unrealistically cheap. Create a management system that works for residents and price the product accordingly.
13. Implement "social licencing" where operators must earn the right to continue extraction through responsible operation, good social relationships, and timely and progressive rehabilitation.
14. Establish an end to each aggregate licence through a "sunset clause". It is unfair to residents and communities when an aggregate operation can exist for an indefinite period. Operators tend to keep near exhausted sites active enough to avoid rehabilitation expense. Or they apply to go deeper/wider and extend the life of the operation. Or they accept commercial fill (the more contaminated / suspect the fill the higher the fee earned). Or they stockpile licences indefinitely causing problems when communities build up around the site. Such never-ending aggregate practices have a negative impact on local communities. Give communities a light at the end of the tunnel.