

Bulletin #29 Early Spring 2017

So... how about that long anticipated Supply and Demand Study of Aggregate Resources....

How much aggregate is already stockpiled? How much is potentially available in mining operations currently under licence? Is it necessary to issue new licences at the rate we're doing now?



In 2009 when the SAROS study [State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario] was released to review and critical debate, there were sharply differing opinions. For example, the report was criticized for its neglect of estimates of reserves of aggregate in Ontario by Dr Larry Jensen, who was a member of the Technical Expert Panel for SAROS. Jensen pointed out that one of the problems with estimating reserves was that there are no legally binding reporting requirements.

However, based on a variety of statistical estimation methods Jensen suggested that aggregate stockpiling in Ontario could be taking place at a rate 13.25 times the annual Ontario consumption based on 2010 figures. This translated into stockpiled reserves that could last up to 200 years at present rates of supply

and demand. Jensen used his over-supply projections to challenge the “no need to show need” clause in the Aggregate Resources Act that exempted proponents from having to demonstrate the need for new supplies of aggregate in order for their licence applications to succeed.

In September 2015 the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry issued a request for bids on a “Supply and Demand Study of Aggregate Resources Supplying the Greater Golden Horseshoe”.

In response to a request for information on the fate of this project, REDC was informed by the Ministry on January 23rd 2017: “Please be advised that this contract was awarded to Golder and Associates. This study has now been completed however its results have not been released to date, pending final government review of the document.”

And to a follow up inquiry on January 24th: “Until such a time as the internal review is complete, there is no set schedule for release”.

No clarification of the reason for withholding of the report was given in spite of a request for one.

Whatever can that “final review” involve? Given that the unreleased study appears to be a partial successor to the SAROS study, part of which was also conducted by Golder Associates Ltd, it isn't much of a stretch to wonder whether it's withheld due to political concerns about its content.

Rockwood's Concerned Residents Coalition (CRC) on the march again

Last fall CRC was contesting the Hidden Quarry proposal at the OMB [when the proceedings were stayed](#). The proponent was unaware that a Township by-law he was challenging had been withdrawn and replaced and now a new variance has to be applied for. As a result of the changes, Official Plan amendments to permit rezoning for aggregate extraction must also be applied for from Wellington County. [CRC's impressive campaign](#) to stop a 100 acre quarry operation remains very active and the pause at the OMB has given the group an opportunity to add to its scientific data.

Protect Mono.... the time has come

For the past 3 years [Mono based citizens have honed their opposition](#) as Greenwood Construction accumulated 410 acres for its licence application to mine gravel. [Protect Mono](#) has engaged in non-stop action to fund its research and develop a credible case. The Greenwood pit proposal did not meet the Town's criteria for by-law amendments. It is now at the OMB - case MM160058.

Moratorium on water taking for bottling purposes ...a done deal

Ontario's moratorium on permits to take water for commercial bottling purposes took effect on December 16th and ends on January 1st, 2019. The draft regulation had wide public support and by the December 1st cut off for comments, there were 21,273 letters from individuals and groups. During this moratorium no pump tests for bottling purposes are allowed and there is to be a review of the best ways to preserve and maintain water resources.

Concern over exploitation of public water resources has been simmering for a long time and is now more acute as drought conditions are a regular occurrence. This concern came to a boil in a case before the Environmental Review Tribunal in 2013. Wellington Water Watchers and the Council of Canadians challenged the Nestlé permit application for its Hillsburgh operation in Wellington County to take water for bottling without regard to severe local drought conditions. While citizens continue to experience seasonal water restrictions, Nestlé sought to pump water at variable rates, based solely on market demand. The tribunal granted the permit but required the company to reduce its water taking in accordance with drought restrictions.

Working around the moratorium... the art of the deal

Provincial plans for Wellington County also exert an influence on water resources. The Township of Centre Wellington (CW), which includes Elora and Fergus, has been designated 'A Place to Grow' by the province. It's looking for reliable municipal wells to support expansion plans. Last fall it tried to buy a former water bottling plant with an active well near Elora.

Nestlé, in the market for a third well in the County, was a rival bidder and closed the deal without the usual condition of a pump test. With the proposed moratorium looming, Nestlé could not conduct the pump test needed for its water taking permit. It offered the Township an opportunity to buy the property on the condition of a leasing proviso for Nestlé which would give both parties [what they needed](#): water trucked to the Nestlé bottling plant in Aberfoyle and municipal water for CW's expanding population. The pump test would be done by CW in support of its consumers needs.

Activist groups [Save Our Water](#) and [Wellington Water Watchers](#) made the case that the Nestlé offer was an attempt to circumvent the moratorium. This January the Township voted to decline the offer.

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