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Uppers Quarry Proposal in Niagara Falls Ontario

To: clerk@niagararegion.ca

I am writing to express my concerns regarding Walker Aggregates Inc.'s plan to develop an additional quarry in Niagara. As per instructions provided in the public notice, I am voicing my concerns and posing questions prior to the public meeting.

First, let me confirm that I am not anti-development rather I am pro-environment, health, safety, food-security, and economic stability; quarries, are none of these.

Second this letter is not focused on property values as my property value is not top-of-mind, given my age. I am concerned, however, about the ongoing erosion of meaningful public consultation, a lack of public trust in big business and some of our policy makers (as per recent issues associated with the Greenbelt), and a healthy and safe future of our children and grandchildren.

Third, I am concerned as to the recent changes in land use and housing policy as implemented by the current Conservative government. This quick passing of legislation has indicated a shift to swift and sweeping changes with minimal consultation. I worry that this policy, among others, (i.e., changes to the Greenbelt) will negatively impact our situation in Niagara Falls regarding the proposed quarry.

Fourth, I continue to be disturbed about the state of the review process and the analysis that is being undertaken in regards to its impact. This concern is heightened particularly in light of [Bill 23](#)'s pro-development stance and its apparent lack of concern for the environment and [agricultural land](#). As a result, I remain opposed to any zoning change or provincial licensing approval that will allow this heavy industry to locate in an area known for its beauty, agriculture, and specific to this location, between two large residential neighborhoods.

Fifth, this heavy industry, if allowed, will be located near hundreds of homes in Niagara Falls (approximately 460 in Fernwood alone), and Rolling Meadows in Thorold. Its suggested location is near long standing businesses, farms, fragile natural environments, underground water tables, pipelines, hydro towers, and potentially historic British, Canadian, and Indigenous artifacts. I am concerned about the significant negative environmental impact and health issues that will arise should a quarry, including an asphalt business, and potentially a dump be developed. (See: Community Services Committee Monday April 3, 2006 [2006/04/03 \(niagarafalls.ca\)](#) (pg. 96, Retrieved March 3, 2023) Executive Summary of Walker Waste Disposal Environmental Assessment).

Finally, my husband and I moved here in 2019 from Vancouver after looking for a year for our final home after numerous moves in Canada and abroad. We did our due diligence in regards to investigating the zoning prior to purchase. At that time, it was well known by some people who were in-the-know (not people like us coming from outside Niagara Falls) that the land surrounding this subdivision was owned by Walker Aggregates Inc. Given that this company does not buy land to farm, it was clear that other uses were being planned. Yet, no one was forthcoming about the possibility of a quarry being erected so close to the home I wished to settle in for my retirement years. Had my husband and I been given this information we would never have bought the bungalow we now inhabit. We were

shocked and angry when we received a notice of a [public meeting to talk about the quarry](#) that same year as were many other Fernwood residents.

- No one chooses to live near a quarry, asphalt plant, or dump.
- No one knowingly purchases a home in an area that will experience noise, dust, and other pollutants.
- No one embraces quarries as “good neighbours”.
- No one relishes the sound of air brakes, stone crushers, and blasting, or hot asphalt and exhaust smells.
- No one can understand why a demonstration of need is not required when a quarry license is sought.
- No one can understand how a company can be so self assured in its ability to persuade politicians and bureaucrats to change existing zoning.
- No one can understand why a considerable amount of time and money is expended to develop bylaws and official plans that are designed to protect the environment, people, and wildlife, yet, it appears to be easily altered by influential and wealthy individuals (i.e., the recent Green Belt fiasco).

In this letter I will:

- Summarize major issues associated with locating another quarry in Niagara (Pgs. 2-3);
- Reiterate reasons why a quarry is a bad idea in this area (Pgs. 3-15);
- Include documentation in Attachment I, and pictures related to this proposal (Pgs.16-22)

Summary of major issues associated with locating another quarry in Niagara

Creek redirection	Pollution? Impact on land now and when redirected? Wildlife? When will it be “better” i.e., after the quarry ceases operation? 5 years, 10 years, 40 years?
Air quality	Health related to constant dust in homes, backyards, etc.
Property damage	Blasting and dust in Fernwood and other existing and proposed housing developments in the area i.e., Rolling Meadows in Thorold.
Wildlife	Loss or reduction of wildlife due to ground and surface water alteration. No major changes in any environment are “better” than they were before, only different and disruptive.
Indigenous consultation	Assurance that the “duty to consult” was followed.
Fly rock	Exemplary mitigation practices related to flying rock.
Noise/vibration	Impact on health, property, mental wellbeing.
Traffic	Noise. Pollution. Road damage from trucks in and out 24/7 with 96 trucks per hour (am) and 76 trucks per hour (pm) not including “local deliveries”.
Community and city reputation	As a clean, safe community for residents and a tourist mecca.

Future policy decisions	If policies improve over the years, will the existing business owner be required to update its practices? Who will clean and pay for the resulting environmental impact?
Tax implications	Due consideration paid to a loss of tax base now and in the future after the quarry closes.
Transparency and trust	Related to purchasing farmland with a long-term goal of building a quarry and potentially an asphalt plant and a dump near two subdivisions; one of which was already in existence. In regards to the directions provided to consultants as to the parameters of what they should study.
Backfill materials	Related to quality and introduction of invasive species of plants.
A potential asphalt plant	It is assumed that consideration for an asphalt plant is a separate application from a quarry. It is not clear where this all-fits in.
Citizen input	The influence public input exerts is minimal. Not respected.
Water quality and supply	Warm water and wildlife impact. Huge amounts needed. Pollution. Impact on businesses losing their water supply.
Loss of farmland/food security	Agriculture rich land is disappearing at significant rates in Niagara.
Impact on tourism	Any heavy industry is not a welcome sight for tourists.
Past planning decisions	Issues related to development of Fernwood and knowledge by decision makers about the potential for a quarry well before the subdivision was approved.

Why a Quarry is a Bad Idea

Need, Economics, and Taxes

- 1) Studies have established that there are enough quarries across Ontario to meet the need for planned construction, particularly considering changing norms related to the environment and up-to-date construction practices. (See: [Moratorium on Ontario Gravel Quarries? - Rock Products Magazine](#)) (See: [There Are Enough Licensed Pits and Quarries in Ontario - The Aggregate Industry Reform Needs Leadership and Vision Not Less Regulations \(newswire.ca\)](#) (Retrieved March 10, 2023).
- 2) It has come to my attention that there is a quarry near Wainfleet that has been given a license to develop a quarry but no extraction work has started. I have not confirmed if this information is correct. If this information is true, we do not need another quarry in Niagara.
- 3) Given food insecurity and cost issues, it is imperative that we ensure there will be enough land where we can grow healthy and clean food. Niagara is well known for its excellent

agricultural land and micro-climate; an area that can support significant agricultural activities. (See: [Household Food Insecurity in Niagara - Niagara Region, Ontario](#))
 (See: [The Impact of Food Insecurity in Niagara – Niagara Knowledge Exchange](#))
 (See: [Causes, Effects and Solutions to Food Insecurity \(Lack of Access to Food\) - Conserve Energy Future \(conserve-energy-future.com\)](#)) (Retrieved March 7, 2023).

- 4) It appears there are no guarantees that a dump will not result from filling of this huge excavation with garbage 40+ years down the road. Given the need for landfill sites, I wonder what assurances residents can expect that no dump will be allowed? (See: [Ontario's big cities face looming landfill shortage after change to approvals process | CBC News](#)) (See: [2006/04/03 \(niagarafalls.ca\)](#) Pg. 93) (Retrieved March 14, 2023).
- 5) Tax revenues, while seemingly high initially and during the life of the project, will presumably decrease when the open pit fills with water after the business has ceased operation (assuming there is no dump). There will be minimal, if any, tax revenue if this location is left as proposed. Additionally, tax that would have been collected from homes that might have been erected on this land, appears to outpace taxes derived from quarries.

“...active gravel pits incur less property tax than single family homes and small businesses. It also leads to properties that are located in the same areas and are similar to gravel pits receiving vastly different property valuations, which contradicts the principle of fairness and transparency underpinning our taxation system that similar properties should be treated and taxed equally”....
 (Source: [TAPMO asks Ontario to hike property tax for aggregate sites \(equipmentjournal.com\)](#)) (Retrieved March 1, 2023).
- 6) The wear and tear on our roads will presumably be repaired using taxes paid by local citizens, and not the company alone. I wonder who will pay for what costs and for how long?
- 7) Construction methods and materials are changing rapidly as citizens everywhere express their concerns over climate change, the need for green energy, and conservation. Allowing a quarry to open in these times and given technological advances in construction (i.e., away from misuse of the environment) it behooves us to think carefully about the impact of our decisions on future generations. (See: [Could turning waste into aggregate save farmland from becoming gravel pits? | CBC News](#)) (See: [Cement has a carbon problem. Here are some concrete solutions. | Grist](#)) (See: [Solidia has a way to make cement that absorbs greenhouse gases instead of emitting them \(qz.com\)](#)). (Retrieved March 12, 2023).
- 8) In 2016, agriculture in Niagara contributed \$1.41 billion to regional GDP and contributed 19,900 jobs – an increase of 15.5% over 2011. Niagara also represented 42.8% of the total agricultural economic impact of the Golden Horseshoe area, despite the fact that Niagara represents only 23% of its total farmland. (Source: [Agri-Business | Niagara Economic Development \(niagaracanada.com\)](#)) (Retrieved March 2, 2023).
- 9) Tourism is enhanced when the area is known to be clean, beautiful, and welcoming. Tourism is a \$2b industry in Niagara. (Source: [Tourism | Niagara Economic Development \(niagaracanada.com\)](#)) (Retrieved March 10, 2023).

“Tourists' expectations when visiting a particular place are related to several features of the chosen destination: culture, architecture, gastronomy, infrastructure, landscape, events, shopping, etc. These features attract people to the destination and contribute to the overall experience of the trip.” (Source: [What most attracts us to a tourist destination? Attractions, culture and gastronomy -- ScienceDaily](#) (Retrieved March 10, 2023).

Water, Air, Wildlife, and Biodiversity

- 10) Altering streams and related wildlife is not a benign activity and has long term impacts on the environment and health and well being of people. Many articles have been written on the negative impact of relocating existing waterways above ground and below. (See, for example: [\(PDF\) Environmental impact analysis of quarrying activities established on and near a river bed by using remotely sensed data \(researchgate.net\)](#) [The Environmental Impacts of Aggregate Extraction | Toronto Environmental Alliance](#)) [What are the affects of a Rock Quarry on Water Quality? \(linkedin.com\)](#) (Retrieved March 8, 2023).
 - 11) As noted in *ON Nature Magazine*, “Extraction is a permanent eviction for the plants and animals originally on the site.” (Source: [ON Nature magazine - Winter 2011 - Page 32-33 \(publitas.com\)](#) (Also see: [ON Nature magazine - Spring 2022 - Page 20-21 \(publitas.com\)](#) (Retrieved March 8, 2023).
 - 12) The amount of water needed for a quarry is huge and once utilized its temperature is raised leading to a negative impact on wildlife. (See: [Burlington anti-quarry campaign joins Ontario-wide push to halt gravel mining | CBC News](#)) (Retrieved March 10, 2023). I wonder how cleaning rocks with water and reintroducing this heated liquid into the environment is an activity that will not negatively impact the environment?
 - 13) As has been discussed by residents living near other quarries, water pollution is a major concern even at distances seemingly far removed from the quarry. Given the plan to redirect a creek, I wonder what Walker Aggregates Inc. will do when complaints arise due to contaminated water? (See: [Residents fear effects of increasing quarry activity on Elmvale groundwater, believed to be cleanest in world | CBC News.](#) “...wetland and biodiversity loss, along with the impacts of climate change, the situation in our waters will only get worse.” (Source: [Canada needs to invest more in fresh water resources | NiagaraFallsReview.ca](#)) (Retrieved March 15, 2023).
 - 14) The recent release of the IPCC Report [IPCC — Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) is clear on the results of the impact of industry on climate change, economics, and wellbeing (See: *Chapter 3: Social, Economic, and Ethical Concepts and Methods*) (Retrieved March 20, 2023).
- In the context of a quarry and pollution, this chapter addresses some of the points noted in my letter:
- a. Cost to this generation vs cost to the next generation of not paying attention to climate change now
 - b. Environmental justice
 - c. The ability of governments to “implement political decisions” (Pg.238)

- d. Regulatory approaches and technology
 - e. “Government failure and policy failure” (Pg. 241)
- 15) The term *longtermism* best describes how I feel about the legacy our generation leaves behind. Quarries do not consider the long-term future of the world. Longtermism is:

“...the view that positively influencing the long-term future is a key moral priority of our time. It's about taking seriously the sheer scale of the future, and how high the stakes might be in shaping it. It means thinking about the challenges we might face in our lifetimes that could impact civilisation's whole trajectory, and taking action to benefit not just the present generation, but all generations to come. (Source: [What is longtermism? - BBC Future](#)). (Retrieved March 8, 2023).

Wind Direction, Frequency, and Speed

- 16) Given what I have read so far concerning this quarry, I am not convinced that appropriate precautions will be taken to ensure that injury to people and structures is mitigated due to dust, noise, traffic, truck pollution, and fly rock. As a starter, I suggest higher berms, more trees/vegetation that can withstand limestone dust, and an ongoing public accounting of changes in the area due to this quarry. Much more needs to be done, however, apart from these common-sense suggestions.
- 17) The existing community, Fernwood, will bear the brunt of the negative fallout of the creation of a quarry. The prevailing strong and frequent westerly winds will increase noise levels and send limestone dust and other pollutants (i.e., from trucks, a potential future dump and/or an asphalt plant) into this community. (See historical weather data: [Niagara Falls, Ontario, CA Historical Weather Almanac \(worldweatheronline.com\)](#) (See: [Dust particles from quarry causing adverse health effects for residents nearby - YouTube](#)) (Retrieved March 8, 2023).
- 18) Based on the most recent public meeting (March 1, 2023), and previous similar meetings hosted by Walker Aggregates Inc.'s consultants, the company continues to dispute the well known and articulated fact, that wind in this area is intense. Selected reports noted by the consultants do not reflect reality. If meaningful public input is sought, this information from residents must be treated with more respect given the knowledge of people living here. This disregard for ongoing discussions around wind indicates a disingenuous approach to public input.
- 19) *Biodiversity* is a term that does not seem to appear in the documents provided by the applicant even though this quarry will reduce biodiversity. According to Britannica ([Biodiversity loss | Causes, Effects, & Facts | Britannica](#)) (Retrieved March 1, 2023):

“ Forest clearing, wetland filling, stream channeling and rerouting, and road and [building construction](#) are often part of a [systematic](#) effort that produces a substantial change in the ecological trajectory of a landscape or a region. As human populations grow, the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems they use may be transformed by the efforts of [human beings](#) to find and produce food, adapt

the landscape to human settlement, and create opportunities for trading with other communities for the purposes of building [wealth](#).

A quarry alters the ecosystem so it will never be the same again and builds wealth for the developer. Of the 30,000 species in Canada for which there is sufficient information, 20% are imperilled to some degree ([CESCC 2016](#)). (Source: [The biodiversity crisis in Canada: failures and challenges of federal and sub-national strategic and legal frameworks \(facetsjournal.com\)](#). (Retrieved March 2, 2023).

“Secondary effects of the quarrying process, such as noise, dust, pollution, and waste removal can also impinge on plants and animals. Indirect impacts on biodiversity can be two-fold. The conversion process of the raw materials requires energy, is potentially polluting and can generate waste – all activities which in themselves have impacts on biodiversity”.

(Source: [Business & Biodiversity - Mining and Quarrying \(businessandbiodiversity.org\)](#) (Retrieved March 2, 2023).

- 20) Given what we know about biodiversity, the lifespan of a quarry (and potentially a dump), I wonder what assurances do we have that 40-90 years from now Walker Aggregates Inc. will make the land “better”? This claim is unrealistic. I am not clear what “better” (Walker’s words) means.
- 21) According to “... the 2021–22 Global Risks Perception Survey, conducted by the World Economic Forum, identified biodiversity loss as the third-most severe global risk over the next 10 years” (Source: [Biodiversity in Canada: Commitments and Trends \(oag-bvg.gc.ca\)](#) Retrieved March 9, 2023). Quarries reduce biodiversity. [‘Without nature we have nothing’ said UN Chief at COP15 Biodiversity summit | Watch \(msn.com\)](#) (Retrieved March 9, 2023).

Even the [Global Cement and Concrete Association](#) (Retrieved March 9, 2023) highlights biodiversity and the care the aggregate industry needs to attend to the ecosystem. This group suggests “that it is important to manage biodiversity as part of responsible and proactive risk management, leveraging value and contributing to society” (May 2020). Based on what the proponents of the quarry industry suggest, I wonder why Walker Aggregates Inc. not develop a rehabilitation plan that is over and above what is legislated?

Health and Safety

- 22) “The chemical composition of asphalt” is detrimental to our health. It “varies depending on the source of the crude oil, the type of asphalt being made, and the processes used to make it. In general, asphalt fumes are a mixture of several different types of compounds. These include: •Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) •Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) •Particulates •Sulfur •Nitrogen oxides •Carbon monoxide” (Source: [Rehabilitation-of-Pits-and-Quarries.pdf \(gravelwatch.org\)](#), (Retrieved March 13, 2023). Breathing this air cannot be considered a good thing for residents living downwind of the quarry and potential asphalt plant.
- 23) Fumes from exhaust of trucks and cars is detrimental to human health. This statement is universally accepted as fact. With more trucks, comes more pollution and poor air quality. (Source: [Effects of Car Pollutants on the Environment | Sciencing](#)) (Retrieved March 7, 2023).

See also the impact of truck pollution, for example, on health in downtown Ottawa as a result of the protest in 2022. (Source: [‘SO CONCERNING’: Physicians file complaint about downtown trucking corridor pollution | Ottawa Sun](#), (Retrieved March 10 2023).

- 24) Noise (from airbrakes, diesel engines, etc.) and pollution from trucks coming/going will be significant. According to one of Walker Aggregates Inc.’s consultants, 96 trucks per hour (am) and 76 trucks per hour (pm) could be expected (not including local deliveries). Given that hours of operation are 24/7, the noise and pollution will be significant. Most trucks will travel via Thorold Stone and Townline Roads, already busy corridors. (Source: [Power point presentation at public meeting on March 1, 2023](#)).
- 25) To quote one of the consultants hired by Walker Aggregates Inc. “I don’t know where you got your information from” ... (in response to a statement from a Fernwood resident at the March 1, 2023 Zoom public meeting who noted dust from quarries may be carcinogenic).

These links below might answer his question as to where she got her information from. They link limestone to a variety of health issues, including cancer. Walker Aggregates Inc., and its consultants, suggest that the limestone it seeks to unearth in Niagara is not carcinogenic, which my research has supported. Nevertheless, given past denials on activities and substances related to poor health (i.e., tobacco, alcohol, cosmetics, etc.) and a growing body of research related to cancer, no one can determine what product will be added to the list of carcinogens in the future.

Quarry dust as a cause of respiratory illness: [Lung Function and Respiratory Health of Populations Living Close to Quarry Sites in Palestine: A Cross-Sectional Study - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#); [Pulverized Lime Side Effects | Healthfully](#). (Retrieved March 5, 2023)

Limestone dust and the lungs – issues noted as far back as 1955: [206.full.pdf \(bmj.com\)](#)

Health and safety of workers: [CCOHS: Health and Safety Report - Past Issues](#) Dust and dust mites’ impact on children: [Dust and dust mites - Canada.ca](#) (Retrieved March 5, 2023)

Limestone dust and respiratory illness:

“...dust lowers visibility on the road, increasing the chance of accidents. The increased likelihood of respiratory diseases like asthma resulting from dust inhalation are an additional risk”. (Source: [What You Need to Know Before Adding Limestone to Your Gravel Road - Midwest Industrial Supply](#) (Retrieved March 5, 2023).

“... Think about how the dust can travel too. It could settle on surfaces and become airborne again”. (Source: [What Is Silica Dust And Why Is It Bad For You? - HASpod](#)) (Retrieved March 5, 2023.)

“Stringent health and safety regulations can offset some of the negative health impacts that quarrying limestone may cause, but not all of them. Inhaling the dust from a limestone quarry is known to cause silicosis and pneumoconiosis. Local populations may suffer from changes to sleep patterns and the increased stress from the quarry can cause unique and unpredictable health concerns”. (Source: [10 Advantages and](#)

[Disadvantages of Quarrying Limestone – ConnectUS \(connectusfund.org\)](#)
(Retrieved March 5, 2023.)

Limestone dust and cancer:

“Exposure of workers to respirable crystalline silica is associated with elevated rates of [lung cancer](#). The strongest link between human lung cancer and exposure to respirable crystalline silica has been seen in studies of quarry and granite workers and workers involved in ceramic, pottery, refractory brick, and certain earth industries”. (Source: [Crystalline Silica - Cancer-Causing Substances - NCI](#)) (Retrieved March 9, 2023).

Regardless of where one stands on the cancer-causing/non-cancer-causing argument, it seems reasonable to assume that no one can dispute that any amount of extra dust in the atmosphere is not good for people or the environment. (See: [Lung Function and Respiratory Health of Populations Living Close to Quarry Sites in Palestine: A Cross-Sectional Study - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#); [Carcinogenic Dust - Stop 3009 Vulcan Quarry - Comal County, Texas](#)) (Retrieved March 9, 2023).

- 26) According to a study completed by Tolga Celika and Cenk Budayanb, (2016), construction projects cause nearby residents two main concerns: noise and dust. They also suggest that high noise levels are often identified in the literature as being within acceptable parameters but:

“...the reason of this conclusion is the ignorance of the concerns of neighboring community... In other words, the target population for these researches [sic] is selected as the internal stakeholders, namely consultants, owners, and contractors. Whereas, this research shows that the neighboring community is affected by the noise extensively, therefore this shows that the studies which are limited with the internal stakeholders is not sufficient. Tolga Celik and Cenk Budayan/Procedia Engineering 161 (2016) 394 – 398 397”. (Source: [How the Residents are Affected from Construction Operations Conducted in Residential Areas \(sciencedirectassets.com\)](#) (Retrieved March 10, 2023).

- 27) Fly rock and adequate setbacks are a concern for the safety of people and vehicles. (See: [Microsoft Word - Blasting Quarries & Adequate Setbacks \(intval.com\)](#). (Retrieved March 18, 2023). The potential for accidents has not been adequately addressed particularly in the instance when an incident does occur.

Quarry Rehabilitation

- 28) Quarry mitigation practices have changed over the years and it is presumed that in the future when agricultural land is scarce and ground and surface water is non-existent, we will question why we allowed such an earth-destroying business to exist and thrive. (Example – oil wells in

Alberta - created then abandoned by owners, etc.) “... Rehabilitation is not static, so a rehabilitation effort should not be considered a static, one-time event (Source: [Microsoft Word - TOARC Report - 2021 Research Summary Final March 20221554](#)) (Retrieved March 5, 2023)

- 29) “Most old pits and quarries are not being properly rehabilitated. As noted in one study [“less than half of the land disturbed for aggregate production between 1992 and 2001 has actually been rehabilitated.”](#) (Retrieved March 10, 2023). The province classifies pits and quarries as “interim uses of the land” and requires 100% rehabilitation of pits and quarries with the word “rehabilitation” apparently taking on a variety of meanings, depending upon one’s viewpoint. Destroyed ecosystems and source water aquifers are irreplaceable. This is not an interim land use. The landscape is blotted with destructive pits and quarries, and species of all kinds endure permanent negative impacts.” (Source: [The Environmental Impacts of Aggregate Extraction | Toronto Environmental Alliance](#)) (Retrieved March 10, 2023)
- 30) Given above points, it appears that there are not enough regulations with significant clout to compel quarry owners to properly rehabilitate their quarries i.e., over and above the minimum current legislated standards. A more robust method of oversight and policing needs to be in place to reassure the public that promises will be honoured today and in the future. Given the number of abandoned quarries in Ontario, there is cause for concern.
- 31) Rehabilitation of gravel pits, open quarries etc. can be a long-term process i.e., Queenston Quarry remains a huge open pit even though it appears that back in 2013 there was great fanfare about its rehabilitation. (Source: [Quarry to community transformation in the works | StCatharinesStandard.ca](#)). (See: [Rock Revival: The future unfolding at the shuttered Queenston quarry is music to one developer’s ears | National Post](#)). (See: [Queenston Quarry | Queenston Quarry revitalization project quietly forging on \(niagarathisweek.com\)](#)) (Retrieved March 5, 2023). All these years later it is still an eyesore, like many others. I wonder: What happened? Who is/was responsible for this lack of a suitable rehabilitation? How was it allowed to be so close to the road and devoid of berms and vegetation along the roadside? One small section still seems to be in use while the bulk of the quarry lies empty and ugly. Why would the owner not rehabilitate the quarry as each section is depleted? These questions are some that Port Colborne residents have been asking in regards to the quarry located there as well, with few answers.
- 32) More should be expected of Walker Aggregates Inc. when it ceases digging up the land, redirecting water, polluting the air, and relocating wildlife. Our elected officials should ensure the rehabilitation plan is designed to be over and above minimum standards and one that is good for the economy, people, animals, and plants, not just the company. I would like to see a more robust rehabilitation plan. (See: [\(PDF\) Re-Use of Abandoned Quarries; Case Study of Eco-Tourism and Rangers Academy – Ajloun -Jordan \(researchgate.net\)](#)) (See: [Mines and quarries: Industrial heritage tourism - ScienceDirect](#)). (Retrieved March 2, 2023)
- 33) Quarries cannot be rehabilitated into farmland. The loss is permanent and “There isn’t a deadline for when a licensee must rehabilitate the land”...(Source: [Guelph Green MPP doubtful that farmlands turned into gravel pits can be rehabilitated | CBC News](#)). (Retrieved March 2, 2023)

Policies – Now and in the Future

- 34) Our municipal, regional, and provincial leaders should demand that companies exceed minimum health, safety, aesthetic, and environmental protection standards rather than accept what is proposed in many instances i.e., meeting current minimum legislated laws and policies.
- 35) Representatives from Walker Aggregates Inc. seem excited to become Fernwood’s neighbour “for a long time” but have not indicated how they will demonstrate their neighbourliness. One way is to exceed minimum standards for dust, noise, pollution, etc. given the recent public input. Instead, their consultants continue to espouse that the additional noise, dust, and pollution, will be within accepted levels. Being a good neighbour means putting more into a community than the minimum. A new rehabilitation plan should be developed. I wonder why would Walker Aggregates Inc. not propose a rehabilitation plan that is compatible with the neighbourhood, and city, by addressing citizen’s concerns rather than focusing on minimum standards?
- 36) Future policy changes should be considered when approving a new quarry. We have all seen past decisions based on expediency and the lure of jobs and tax revenues. Unfortunately, many of them have led to expensive and environmentally disastrous clean-up projects or introduction of new and invasive plant species as noted in a large-scale gravel pit rehabilitation study undertaken at the University of Guelph:

“There are several open questions about future policy designations and their related impacts on the area including: how will the City’s natural heritage sites be managed in the future? What land use planning changes are expected...? What might the impacts of climate change...mean for the naturalization of the site?”

(Source: [Microsoft Word - TOARC Report - 2021 Research Summary Final March 20221554](#))
(Retrieved March 2, 2023)

- 37) Based on an article in *Rock to Road* (February 2, 2017), Walker Aggregates Inc. committed itself to adjusting to changing norms. I wonder what confidence can we have that these words will turn into action 40+ years down the road?

“There’s been a big paradigm shift over the last couple of years right across the industry,” says Kielbowich. “More aggregate companies are working with their neighbours [and general public] and keeping them informed. There’s a lot more environmental compliance. I think we’re a pretty good leader in those sectors... The theme of today is sustainability. There’s a lot of new measures in place, whereas, 10 or 15 years ago you didn’t need to manage the noise coming out of a quarry; now you have to mitigate those things.” (Source: [Returning to roots: Walker Aggregates talks land rehabilitation - Rock to Road](#))
(Retrieved March 10, 2023)

- 38) Provincial policies by a Conservative government that favour industry over farmland. [The province wants to turn this farmland into factories. The neighbours hate it. | CBC News](#)
(Retrieved March 3, 2023)

Duty to Consult

- 39) I assume that the “[duty to consult](#)” with Indigenous people has been followed and that no objections have been raised by Indigenous groups. It is not entirely clear to me.

Trust and Transparency

- 40) It appears that over the last 20 years, or longer, Walker Aggregates Inc. has been purchasing farmland in the area. Obviously, land can be acquired without informing people in the community. Nevertheless, purchasing this agricultural land with no intention of farming, demonstrates a disregard for the current zoning designation. It also indicates a belief, by the company, that it would be able to change the zoning. This confidence in a zoning change (in its favour), is disconcerting. I wonder why the City of Niagara Falls and the Regional Municipality approved the development of Fernwood, given the information they had at the time in regards to Walker’s acquisition of fertile farmland?
- 41) The experts hired by Walker Aggregates Inc., continue to dispute what Fernwood residents say about the wind. I have seen our aluminum table chairs blown 10 feet from a covered deck to the lawn, a large backyard container box moved 6 feet across my patio, and two stand-up umbrella stands have been broken in the past three years. Apparently what residents of this neighbourhood experience every day is not enough evidence to refute what off-site experts have to say. Fernwood residents have repeatedly made note of these strong winds but their comments continue to be disputed by Walker Aggregates Inc.’s experts. The real experts are long standing residents of Fernwood. This lack of respect for the public’s comments regarding wind, instills mistrust in the consultation process.
- 42) A lack of trust regarding meaningful attention to air quality and smell is also evident as per questions at the public meeting on March 1, 2023. Residents of Fernwood can periodically smell the dump and hear blasting from the current quarry. Again, this information was disputed by the experts. Given the proposal to locate an asphalt plant along with the quarry, and a lack of respect for public input at this time, it seems realistic to assume that minimal attention will be paid to future complaints.
- 43) A lack of trust emerges when the consultants say there will be minimum impact from dust, noise, smell, etc. as the studies show it is within legislated parameters. And to suggest that the water, bird, and butterfly habitats, and vegetation, will eventually be “better” than they are now makes it sound as if quarries are desirable. If that assertion is the case, then we all would want a quarry located near our homes.
- 44) It is not clear to us if residents of Fernwood and/or the large subdivision in Thorold, will have any input over the years as to ongoing noise, air, and water pollution.
- 45) Over the last few years public input, and other forms of citizen participation re: the environment, have eroded. This current pro-big business stance will impact us for many years to come, as is still evident from policies made when Mike Harris formed a government. (See: [Opinion: What did Mike Harris know? - The Globe and Mail](#). (See: [Mike Harris’s former environment minister appointed by province to head Greenbelt Council | The Star](#)) (See: [Ontario Policy magazine - Summer 2015- final.pdf \(policyalternatives.ca\)](#) (See: [Walkerton Tragedy | The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)). (See: [Ford government to take powers away from conservation authorities | Canada's National Observer: News & Analysis](#)) (See: [Seven members of Doug Ford's Greenbelt](#)

[Council resign over conservation authority changes | Canada's National Observer: News & Analysis](#)) (Retrieved March 10, 2023).

- 46) An example of a lack of trust in the process, is noted in the quote below from the consultant's study *Alternative Site Analysis*, indicating the parameters within which the consultant was told to work. It appears that minimal effort was put into consideration of alternative sites in the Niagara area as per the guidelines given to the consultant:

“In determining the overall study area and potential alternative sites, Walker identified a geographic area to situate a new quarry to replace the depleting nearby Walker Brothers Quarry which is just over 2 kms away (“Market Area”). From this Market Area, lands within Urban Areas and Unique Agricultural Areas have been removed that are not suitable for a quarry when compared to the subject lands. This refines the Market Area into a ‘Study Area’”.

It is unclear why a larger radius was not considered. There does not appear to be a justification for this 2km criteria. The radius should have been increased.

- 47) According to multiple presenters at the Port Colborne public meeting re: the expansion of the existing Rankin quarry (March 7, 2023 at Port Colborne City Hall), a major concern for these citizens is a lack of transparency in regards to follow through on rehabilitation plans. Although the quarry they refer to is not owned by Walker Aggregates Inc., their complaints support the belief that the quarry industry has a disregard for agreements made to local citizens and elected officials. It also highlights the lack of oversight of quarries once the licenses are granted.
- 48) Also noted at this meeting was reference to quarry owners living up to agreements made prior to licensing. At this meeting, one presenter discussed his attempt at getting compensation for his well drying up and received \$80.00. He also discussed the apparent unwillingness of the quarry owner to undergo rehabilitation activities as sections of the gravel pit were depleted. Instead, the owner appeared to have elected to forego any rehabilitation until the entire pit was depleted which will be years in the future. Quarry owners should be expected to submit a rehabilitation plan that considers this approach i.e., as sections are depleted rehabilitation occurs.
- 49) According to *Gravel Watch* “The backlog of pits and quarries requiring rehabilitation is high” (Source: [Rehabilitation-of-Pits-and-Quarries.pdf \(gravelwatch.org\)](#) (Pg. 6). Additionally, when quarry owners decide to renege on their commitment, or defer their lack of action to outdated polices created years ago when the quarry opened (and no longer considered adequate), taxpayers must pay for the cleanup [Taxpayers on the hook for Ontario aggregate mine cleanup | The Star](#). (Retrieved March 8, 2023) Headline: “...Ontario’s lax rules leave local taxpayers on the hook for aggregate mine cleanup.” “Thousands of pits opened in the province before 1990 are not covered by rules around rehabilitation.”
- 50) Fernwood Estates was built close to land that was being purchased by Walker Aggregates Inc. It appears that the council of the day approved this development with the knowledge that land was being acquired around Fernwood, and not for farm use, but for a potential quarry. Representatives of Walker Aggregates Inc. have suggested that the company had not decided what to do with this acquired farmland but given that it is not in the farming business, it is reasonable to assume there

were plans for quarry all along. Past reports obtained from the City of Niagara Falls support this assertion as far back as 2001.

- 51) Given that other quarry companies have done the same thing (i.e., purchased farmland with no intention of farming it) I wonder how can we trust our local, regional, and provincial decisions makers to inform the public as to the real plans for buying up quality farmland by owners who are not in the farming business? ([Quarry on Ont. farmland was the plan, firm says | CBC News](#)) (Retrieved March 10, 2023).
- 52) Articles about various tactics employed by quarry owners to quell appropriate public input, abound. For example, note this article related to the Burlington quarry and the applicant's tactics when seeking public input. [Quarry-created park website misleading Burlington residents, says councillor | CBC News](#). (Retrieved March 1, 2023).
- 53) Another example of a lack of respect for public input, is chronicled in the *Globe and Mail* (November 23, 2019). The article highlights Gabriella Zagorski's [master's research](#) on the negative impact of a quarry on turtle habitats. Her work was also chronicled in: [Turtle lovers decry Ontario's appetite for construction | The Narwhal](#). (Retrieved March 10, 2023) While she was conducting her research her integrity was questioned by a consulting firm hired to conduct an environmental assessment for a quarry owner. (Source: *Globe and Mail*, November 3, 2019: *Northern Ontario's turtle tussle pits scientists against quarry builders, with a threatened species caught in the middle*).

“In a letter to Laurentian’s vice-president of research, the company wrote that the scientists had committed research misconduct and asked the university to investigate. The letter was copied to municipal and provincial officials connected to the approval process for the quarry.

The university determined the complaint to be without merit and did not launch a misconduct investigation. Dr. Litzgus, a long-time faculty member who is known for her work in turtle ecology, saw the broadside as an attempt to undercut the scientists’ credibility with decision makers....Without naming their accusers, the scientists included mention of a “defaming attack” when they published their findings in October’s edition of research journal [Global Ecology and Conservation](#). They noted that “after several exchanges between lawyers, a letter of apology and a retraction of the accusations was received from the consultant.” (Source: [Northern Ontario’s turtle tussle pits scientists against quarry builders, with a threatened species caught in the middle - The Globe and Mail](#)) (Retrieved March 10, 2023).

This example highlights behaviour that stifles mutually respectful dialogue resulting in silencing public input. I do not suggest that the current applicant and its consultants would consider this approach, but the stories mentioned here create an environment of mistrust.

- 54) The third slide of the public presentation made by Walker Aggregates Inc., on March 1, 2023, intimates that the limestone from the quarry will contribute to the building of the new hospital. (See: [PowerPoint Presentation \(uppersquarry.ca\)](#)) Local citizens support this hospital but it is

my understanding that the current Thorold quarry provides materials that are used mostly in roads, not buildings. I also understand that Walker Aggregates Inc., will have no part in erection of the hospital or its parking lots.

- 55) I have read that Walker Aggregates Inc., has a good track record of rehabilitating quarries (See: [Walker Aggregates' Meaford Quarry Receives Progressive Rehabilitation Award | The Meaford Independent](#)) (Retrieved March 10, 2023). I hope that, if approved, it will rehabilitate the quarry in a timely manner with attention to citizen input and regarding the environment and economic and health-related norms of the day.

I also hope that Walker Aggregates Inc., will resubmit a rehabilitation plan that will add to the beauty of Niagara, tourism, and well being of nearby residents. It is not clear how the current plan addresses any of these concerns.

Destruction of Precious Farmland

- 56) Over the past two decades, Ontario lost farmland at a rate of 175 acres (about 70 hectares) a day, the equivalent of five family farms each week, according to a recent analysis of census data from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). (Source: [Ontario loses 175 acres of farmland to urban development a day, says farmers group | CBC News](#)) (Retrieved March 2, 2023).
- 57) “Total farmland area in Niagara decreased by 2.1% or 4,660 acres from 222,911 acres in 2011 to 218,251 acres in 2016. Niagara Falls had the greatest decrease in farmland area by 44.6% or 4,286 acres. West Lincoln Port Colborne, and Pelham had significant decreases, and Lincoln also had a minor decrease in farmland area”. Source: [Niagara Agriculture Profile \(niagararegion.ca\)](#) (Retrieved March 2, 2023).
- 58) Presumably the City of Niagara Falls values agricultural land or the land currently acquired by Walker Aggregates Inc. would not have been zoned agricultural in the first place. I wonder why a change in this zoning would be entertained by local authorities considering what we know about shrinking farmland and food insecurity?
- 59) [The province wants to turn this farmland into factories. The neighbours hate it. | CBC News](#) (Retrieved March 18, 2023).

I look to our civic, provincial, and federal politicians, relevant staff members, and even business leaders, to do whatever is necessary to protect the health of our families, communities, wildlife, and the environment – today, tomorrow and into the future.

Regards,

Frances Chandler MCIP, RPP, OCT; BES, MA, BEd, PhD

Notes: Attachment I: Pgs. 16-22 includes photos

See attachment I...

ATTACHMENT I

Backyard view of homes on Osprey and Madison. **Note** that the trees are not on the property of these home owners. They are not sufficient to provide a visual or dust barrier. Many of the homes have balconies on the second level that will be the recipient of dust, noise, and air pollution from trucks and quarry operations (Pictures taken February 27, 2023).

View of homes take from Beechwood Road i.e., rear view not street view.



View of homes taken from Beechwood Road i.e., the rear view of the homes not the street view (Pictures taken February 27, 2023).



View of land on the west side of Beechwood. (Picture taken February 27, 2023) There are no mature trees on either side of Beechwood that could provide a dust or visual buffer.



Images of Walker Aggregates Inc' Thorold Quarry: Not a view people would enjoy seeing.



(Source: [Walker Aggregates Quarries in thorold - Bing images](#)) (Retrieved March 24, 2023)



(Source: [Walker plan to open Niagara Falls quarry faces long process | StCatharinesStandard.ca](https://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca))
(December 9, 2019)



(Source: [Aerial View of Walker Brothers Quarries - Details \(nflibrary.ca\)](https://www.nflibrary.ca) Picture taken 2004 by Wayne Farrar)

"Hopefully we can get a quarry, and we're going to be neighbours for a long time."

View of the Thorold quarry from Taylor Road. Taken on March 16, 2023.

Walker Aggregates Inc. suggests that its quarry is well hidden with berms and landscaping. Scruffy trees and unattractive fencing are what I see from the road. Pictures taken on March 16, 2023.

Is this an example of the view that residents can expect to see with the new quarry?



View of the Thorold quarry from Mountain Road. Pictures taken on March 16, 2023.



Below: Queenston Quarry View from the side of Niagara Townline Road: Taken March 18, 2023
Minimum setback from the road, garbage along its perimeter, and an eyesore.
No Rehabilitaiton activities are evident.



Pollution, noise, and potential safety issues related to trucks travelling on busy roads and through the Thorold Tunnel.



... overturned gravel truck seen near Hamilton in November 2015. (Dave Ritchie/CBC) (Source: Retrieved March 19, 2023 [Hidden Quarry fight goes before Ontario Municipal Board | CBC News](#)).

See Youtube video of trucks coming and going to and from a quarry. What it sounds like.
(Source: [Dump trucks hauling aggregate from area quarries stream in and out of Foxconn site - YouTube](#) Retrieved March 19, 2023).

Note: This video is not taken at one of Walker Aggregates Inc.'s quarries. It is included as an example of what trucks in a busy quarry sound like.

Below: Rendering of the proposed hospital for South Niagara as shown on slide #3 of the March 1, 2023 public presentation by Walker Aggregates Inc.

The caption on the slide was: **Helping Build Niagara - New Niagara South Hospital.**



It is not clear why this picture was shown in the public presentation given by Walker.

Aggregate from the proposed and existing quarry is not the type used in a building like this one.

Another aggregate company has been hired to provide the stone for this project. It gets its stone from a quarry not located in the Niagara region.

Photo Source: [Contract awarded for the new South Niagara site capital project - Niagara Health News, Updates & Publications | Niagara Health System | Système De Santé De Niagara](#)