

Background

- The Highland Companies, through a series of numbered companies, has acquired over 6,000 acres of prime agricultural land in Melancthon and Mulmur Townships
- It appears that this acquisition has been financed by a hedge fund located in Boston

Background continued

- A community meeting was held at the Honeywood Arena on January 17, 2009 to discuss potential issues regarding this land assembly
- Residents nominated 11 committee members to monitor the activities of The Highland Companies, liaise with councils, the county and provincial politicians and keep the community informed

NDACT's MISSION STATEMENT

- **We live in The Hills of the Headwaters, in North Dufferin County, recognized as one of the primary sources for water recharge feeding the Nottawasaga and Grand Rivers. Our homes and farms are nestled in an area of magnificent beauty and serenity, amongst some of the best and most productive soils and farmland in Ontario.**
- **The primary mission of the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce is to preserve and protect these unique and non-renewable resources, including the agricultural lands, character and lifestyle that have played such an important and vibrant part of our community for more than 150 years**

NDACT Activities to date

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN –many of our neighbours – especially in Mulmur - are not aware of what is happening!

- Ads in local papers
- Flyers distributed
- Website established (www.ndact.com)
- On-line Petition and Petition/Feedback Cards sent out

NDACT has been monitoring several issues related to this land assembly:

- tree removal activities that have contravened county bylaws
- water issues (including wells)
- Rural Blockbusting – House Demolitions
- debris dumping
- farm practices/land stewardship (we are concerned about soil erosion/sediment issues)
- the potential sale of the Orangeville-to-Owen Sound railway corridor

NDACT Activities –Presentations and Meeting with:

- Sylvia Jones MPP
- OMAFRA land use planning staff
- Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Melancthon Council
- Mulmur Council
- Grey Highlands
- Dufferin County
- Museum Board regarding Tree Cutting
- Local Press
- OFA and CFFO
- Ontario Potato Board
- CORE / MC(2)

Specialty Crop Designation

- In February NDACT made a submission to Melancthon, Mulmur and Grey Highlands councils requesting that a good portion of the land assembly be incorporated into the upcoming Official Plan with a **Special Crop Designation** in order to preserve their heritage use.
- Similar designations have been recognized for the Niagara Wine Region, Holland Marsh and the Thornbury Apple Growing area.

Specialty Crop Designation

Provincial Policy Statement 2005 reads:

Prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long term use in Agriculture.

Prime agricultural areas are areas where prime agricultural lands predominate.

Specialty Crop areas shall be given the highest priority for protection

Specialty Crop Designation

Provincial Policy Statement also reads:

“In prime agricultural land...extraction is permitted provided...rehabilitation of the site for agriculture is restored...and provided other alternatives are unsuitable.. in areas of class 4 to 7 soils.”

What makes this land special?

Main qualifiers for “Vegetable Land” that this land scores Excellent on:

- **Loam** – not sand, not clay
- **Well drained** – because of its limestone base
- **Level**
- **Stone Free**
- **Moderate Climate**
- **Uniform** – large area of farms with the identical soil type from front to back
- **Close to the largest market in Canada** – the GTA

Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA)

- The OFA unanimously passed a resolution supporting NDACT's proposed Specialty Crop Designation for this area
- Residents of Mulmur and Melancthon need to pressure their councils to come out in support of the proposed Specialty Crop Designation

What should residents of Mulmur be concerned about?

Water

- **Where does our water come from?**
- **Will an industrial aggregate extraction operation in Melancthon, below the water table, threaten the sources of water for Mulmur?**

Is Mulmur Next?

Is Aggregate Extraction planned for Melancthon only?

- **The Highland Group has extensive land holdings in Mulmur. They have promised our council that they will not extract aggregate in our township.**
- **On two separate occasions, members of the CORE executive have asked Highlands to enter into a binding agreement to back up that representation**
- **Highlands has refused to do so.**

Conclusion

- Let your council know **IN WRITING** that you are concerned about Highlands' plans for both Melancthon and Mulmur!

We are expecting an industrial aggregate extraction operation bordering the townline (east of HWY 124) – what does this mean for Mulmur?

- ***Noise!***
- ***Dust!***
- ***Trucks!***
- ***Huge Visual Impact!***
- ***Disruption of a highly sensitive water recharge area!***
- ***Demolition of houses and Rural Blockbusting!***
– ***reduced population, reduced tax base,***

What about our property values?

Should The Highland Companies succeed in developing a large pit just west of us, you can bet that property values in Mulmur will be affected significantly... (visit the JAMES DICK pit, Caledon)

Highlands Offered, in writing, to meet with NDACT

We suggested dates...

...they have since declined to meet

Aggregate Polices in Ontario are Antiquated

They are a holdover from a bygone era, before massive population growth and significant reductions in available agricultural land due to urban sprawl.

Much Has Changed Since Then!

- Significant Population Growth
- Loss of Farmland
- Food Shortages
- Concerns over aquifer and water safety (note Walkerton)

Facts

- Only 3.6% of Ontario's landmass is dedicated to farmland
- Vegetable land makes up only 1.6% of Ontario farmland or .06% of our province's landmass

Lack of Public Understanding of this Land's Special Qualities

- Only 1.3% of Canada's population are farmers (229,000 farms).
- Few policy decision makers are aware of the importance of this land – both to agriculture and Ontario's watershed.

Quarry Facts:

- Q: Where is the worlds' largest limestone Quarry?
- A: Roger's City Michigan – approximately 6000 acres of excavation on the edge Lake Huron producing up to 10 million tons of limestone/year

The Highland Companies' Landholdings in Melancthon and Mulmur?

- Over 6000 Acres

Recent Developments:

The Highland Companies have informed Melancthon Council that an application to extract limestone is imminent (3 to 6 months)

Melancthon Council's Response?

- "It's been rumoured for years, so it's not that much of a surprise to us. Can we stop it? I don't think we can stop it. Can we get the best deal for the community? We'll try as best we can...to make it as safe as possible".

Mayor Debbie Fawcett

Deer in headlights.



Eric's Funny Pictures

NDACT's position on Mayor Fawcett's statement:

- She is abdicating the responsibility entrusted to her by the citizens she represents.
- Even if Ms. Fawcett were to favour a quarry proposal, she has a duty - and an obligation - to aggressively negotiate on behalf of the Municipality.

F.Y.I.

- Mayor Fawcett's farm was sold to The Highland Companies in 2007

In Conclusion...

- Agricultural Land is a finite resource - it is disappearing rapidly due to urban sprawl
- Protecting this land – and the water recharge area that feeds The Nottawasaga (including The Pine River), The Grand, and our ponds and wells - should be amongst the Province's top priorities

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- The loss of prime agricultural land, so close to Canada's largest city, and the potential impact on the headwaters, are matters of Provincial significance and should be of deep concern to all Ontario residents