

**NFU RECOMMENDS THAT THE HIGHLANDS COMPANIES' APPLICATION FOR  
MELANCTHON QUARRY BE REJECTED**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 27, 2011**

**Guelph, Ont.** – The National Farmers Union (NFU) has sent a letter to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources this week, recommending that it decline the application made by The Highlands Companies for the Melancthon Quarry. The Melancthon Quarry is located underneath prime agricultural land, best suited for feeding the people of Ontario. “Each year more and more prime farmland is exploited for industrial uses like aggregate extraction,” stated NFU Board Member Ann Slater.

The 2,300 acre quarry site owned by The Highlands Companies in Melancthon Township comprises 4 percent of the prime agricultural land in the township. The Highlands Companies claims that it will return 1300 acres to agricultural use, once the aggregates are removed, in accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

“Once the aggregates are removed from beneath prime agricultural land such as this, full rehabilitation is impossible. The good drainage of ‘gravel-bottom’ land is what makes the land so valuable as farmland, especially for higher value crops such as potatoes,” according to Slater.

“The Highlands Companies application is a perfect example of the flaws of the PPS, namely the priority it gives to aggregates over farmland. It is not just about this application. If this application for aggregate removal is accepted, there will no doubt be more. The ongoing loss of prime farmland will be devastating for local food systems and our ability to feed the people of Ontario now and in the future. There is no foresight here,” continued Slater.

Over the past five years, The Highland Companies has amassed approximately 7,500 acres of prime farmland in Melancthon and Mulmur townships, including the proposed quarry site. The Highland Companies is owned by private investors based in the United States and Canada, through a US based Hedge fund operation. The Highland Companies promotes itself as a farming operation, along with an aggregate extraction company.

“Just as with other corporate foreign owners of farmland, the real reason The Highland Companies owns farmland in Dufferin County, is for the financial benefit of its investors. They will continue to develop the land in the manner that provides them with the greatest financial return, and with no consideration for protecting farmland or rural communities. This is part of a growing trend not only in Canada, but around the world - the buy-up of vast amounts of farmland by huge multi-national investment firms,” said Slater.

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