



PARLIAMENT HILL: Happy Earth Day to all

MP David Sweet

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Today is Earth Day and, this year, an estimated one billion people from 175 countries are expected to take a few minutes to recognize our environment.

In the 20 years we have been celebrating Earth Day in Canada, the power of individual actions to help our environment has been a consistent message.

We need to look no further than our own backyard to see how community-based action can make a difference. What I'm referring to is the Ministerial Zoning Order under the Planning Act that was issued by the Ontario Government last week with regard to the proposed quarry in northeast Flamborough.

It was a pleasure to rise in the House of Commons on Monday to salute the work of FORCE, the group of Carlisle, Freelon, Mountsberg, Campbellville and Kilbride residents led by Graham Flint and his committee, who have worked diligently for years to see this day.

FORCE stands for Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment. These local citizens have long argued that groundwater and sensitive wetlands in northeast Flamborough are threatened by the proposed quarry.

This is one of the few times in Ontario's history that such a Ministerial Zoning Order has been issued. That is in no small measure due to the work of our MPP Ted McMeekin. I've come to know Ted over the past four years that we have served together as federal and provincial representatives for this riding and you can see his trademark dedication to the community in this decision by the Ontario government.

Congratulations and thank you, Ted.

Thank you also to Councillor Margaret McCarthy who worked every angle at the municipal level, including securing a unanimous motion of Hamilton City Council. Margaret is another unsung hero in this great story.

While a potential appeal may yet be in the offing and an ultimate conclusion to the battle FORCE began so many years ago may yet take some time, there's no doubt this is a watershed moment for our communities.

Also coming up in May is the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Holland by Canadian troops at the end of the Second World War. In the Netherlands, May 5 is celebrated as Liberation Day for that reason. It marks a long history of friendship between our two countries which is most often recognized by the tulips along the Rideau Canal in Ottawa that bloom each May.