

Niagara Heritage Partnership

Advocating for the preservation and restoration of the region's natural environment
and encouraging socially responsible development.

February 14, 2011

Gilles Colas, President and CEO
Saint-Gobain North America
750 E. Swedesford Road
Valley Forge, Pa 19482

Dear President Colas,

I am writing to inquire about the actions of Mr. Zach Collister, a Saint-Gobain employee here on the Niagara Frontier, who has chosen to identify himself as such whenever he engages in the public debate regarding highway removal, a longstanding local and regional issue. Do his opinions reflect the official stance of Saint-Gobain?

If this is the case, we hope that some of the following and accompanying information might be helpful in convincing the company to rethink its position.

The Niagara Heritage Partnership is engaged in what has become a fourteen-year advocacy campaign to remove four lanes of parkway from about a five mile stretch of the Niagara gorge rim and to restore that area to natural, native landscapes. Accordingly, we strongly support the Wild Ones Niagara group in its efforts to accomplish the same (I'm also a member of that organization), which was recently funded (\$140,000) via the Niagara River Greenway Commission and the City of Niagara Falls, NY to pursue the following study: "Regional Economic Growth Through Ecological Restoration of the Niagara Gorge Rim."

Our parkway removal proposal involves the New York Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the New York State Power Authority, The Department of Transportation and other agencies. Our support for removal is broad, local, state, and even international, with credible groups such as the Niagara River Restoration Council, Ontario, Canada, signing on in favor of removal. The complete list of supporting organizations, over eighty of them, is available at www.niagaraheritage.org. We would, of course, welcome the support of Saint-Gobain—and/or your support as an individual. You might decide to sign your name to the online petition posted onsite (currently over 2000 signatures), to which we add the 2000 + additional names that have signed hardcopy pages since we became active.

Naturally, our parkway removal advocacy has its detractors, and it is this group with whom Mr. Collister appears to identify. We note that, in addition to its oppositional content, he submitted his response to my Guest View (which was published in the

Niagara Gazette of Niagara Falls, NY) to a small weekly that serves villages 6 to 12 miles distant, a locale from which most of our opposition originates. (Copies of both accompany this letter.)

Saint-Gobain's "General Principles of Conduct and Action" is impressive, and we took special notice of "Caring for the environment," which is, foundationally, what our advocacy is about. We couldn't determine why Saint-Gobain would take a position against it, other than the remote possibility that the slight anticipated increase in traffic counts on local roads, should we be successful, might be seen as problematic to the company. (Commercial traffic is prohibited on the parkway in question.)

In the end we were left with two possibilities: 1) Mr. Collister's views represent those of Saint-Gobain, or 2) they do not, but perhaps he cites his affiliation with Saint-Gobain to lend legitimacy to his opinions, which we see, incidentally, as unsubstantiated assertions of low quality generally—scarcely the quality of commentary with which a company would choose to be associated. It is clear that he knows little or nothing about the natural world, i.e., ecology, or ecotourism, both central to our concerns. Those portions of his commentary which spend time stating the obvious, and calling for respect, responsibility, logic, etc, might pass for "wisdom" in some quarters, but we accept them as givens, and Mr. Collister should look to himself for these qualities before insulting the rest of us with his puerile arguments.

While his public assertions may lack substance, they have the potential to harm our advocacy. We are asking you, therefore, to please clarify the status of Mr. Collister as to whether or not he is a spokesperson for Saint-Gobain as soon as possible so that we may proceed accordingly.

Sincerely,

Bob Baxter
Conservation Chair
Niagara Heritage Partnership

NO RESPONSE RECEIVED