

The Proposed Bala Falls Hydro-electric Generating Station

The proponent placed the advertisement below in the October 19, 2011 edition of the Gravenhurst Banner. At the sides below, we have added our comments on their distorted view of reality – and we would add that over six years has passed since they submitted their initial proposal and they continue to delay the process by not answering:

- Would it be safe
- Would it be beautiful
- Would there be enough scenic flow over the falls to draw people to Bala

The community has never been engaged. The proponent has not had any meaningful community consultation. The only changes the proponent has made to their proposed project have been to increase their own profit.

The proponent continues to make unjustified statements. How can Option 2 be “generally preferred”, when we don’t even know what Option 1 is. The proponent has presented four different versions of their proposed Option 1, all impossible or withdrawn.

This original plan claimed Option 1 would fit entirely on crown land, but they eventually admitted it would not. This gross error or deception by the proponent shows the public didn’t even have the information to provide any guidance. Any actions taken by the proponent was their own decision.

Mayor Alice Murphy was very clear about her election platform and received 50% more votes than the COMBINED total of all the others running for Mayor. This is the democratic process. That the proponent resorts to personal attacks on our duly elected public officials is a serious concern.

ADVERTORIAL

Open Letter to the Bala Community

We are writing this letter on behalf of Swift River Energy Limited to the residents of the community of Bala, to inform them that after four years of public and stakeholder engagement, and of satisfying the painstakingly detailed provincial and federal scientific and engineering review of the North Bala Small Hydro Project environmental assessment, we have been left with little choice but to abandon the generally preferred Option 2 plan and pursue the re-development on the Ministry’s originally offered Option 1 site.

Swift River’s team submitted the original Option 1 plan to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) in 2005 in response to MNR’s open invitation for applications to re-develop the Bala site, and were ultimately the successful applicant. After an initial presentation and feedback from the community in 2007, however, our team spent extensive time and effort to redesign the project into what is now known as the Option 2 plan. Those changes were made to specifically accommodate the community’s requests to maintain greater public access to the south shore of the Bala Falls; to improve the appearance of the facility; and to incorporate a public park area atop the improved Option 2 plan would only be possible with the agreement of the Township of Muskoka Lakes (TML) and the District Municipality of Muskoka (DMM) to lease the required lands to Swift River. In 2008, TML and DMM agreed, through resolutions in council, that this was an acceptable plan.

However, the Oct. 2010 municipal election saw a new TML council elected, led by Mayor Alice Murphy. Mayor Murphy has made no secret of the fact that she is opposed to seeing any waterpower development at the site for which her property is located directly opposite. However, in a last ditch effort to try to work with the new mayor and council, Swift River committed this last year to try to achieve some compromise or agreement with the Township in this matter - with no success.

Therefore, at this late stage, we have been left with little choice but to pursue the re-development on the MNR’s original Option 1 site, located entirely on Crown lands for which we have Applicant of Record Status (the location of the original waterpower facility). This scenario requires no lease agreement with TML.

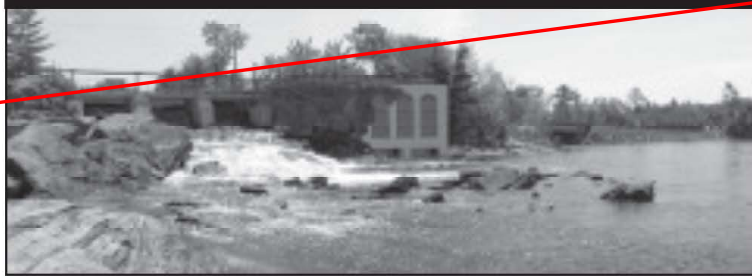
Swift River remains committed to becoming a socially and environmentally responsible member of the Bala community. Our team will continue to maintain an open dialogue and work with the residents and businesses and to ensure construction is orderly and considerate of the issues. Our goal remains to ensure that this new green energy facility will be one in which the Bala community can again be proud.

Swift River will be announcing the next steps in the process in the coming weeks. Thank you for your understanding.

Respectfully,
Anthony Zwig, President and
John Wildman,
Vice Chair
(www.balafalls.ca)



Option 1: Crown Land, next to the Falls.



Option 2: Municipal Land, 100 feet away from the Falls.



The proponent has not satisfied provincial or federal environmental assessments. The provincial assessment is under review, the federal assessment is considered deficient, and approvals have not been issued. These are the facts, how can the proponent claim to be responsible when they don’t tell the truth.

Proponent, please tell us what compromise you have offered. All we have seen from you is a repetition of evasive responses instead of actual answers to our many serious public safety and economic questions.

We look forward to the proponent **beginning** an open dialogue, a good start would be actually answering the public’s many questions.

We look forward to receiving believable information about Option 1, along with answers to the public’s many outstanding questions.

The District and Township only agreed to **consider** this, subject to many conditions – **which have not been met**. This is all in official resolutions, why does the proponent try to mislead and confuse the public.