

To: All residents and elected representatives in the Township of Muskoka Lakes and The District of Muskoka

Re: The current proposal for a Hydro Power Plant in Bala

I am writing each of you to solicit your support for a strong protest to be aimed at the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Province, for their approval of the current proposal by Swift River Energy Ltd. SREL is finally releasing a few details of their newly proposed design and, it now calls for a poured-concrete building rising three storeys above Muskoka Road 169. It would fill the 70'-wide Crown land site, and be over 100' long, right beside the Bala north falls, stretching from roadside down to the Moon River. This monstrosity is way bigger and much more intrusive than any of their previous designs and should be offensive to anyone who believes Muskoka's natural beauty is worth protecting. Do not let this happen on your watch!

Until now, the proponent claimed *“Our intention is to harmonize the architecture of the new facility with the natural environment of the site by installing a low-profile power house built mostly underground (bunker-type). Its roof will be below road level.”* Now we find none of this is true and the MNR apparently isn't requiring the proponent to keep their promises. This is not acceptable.

Any proposal for putting a power plant in the middle of Bala, beside our premier tourist attraction was ludicrous to begin with but, the thought that this newly proposed design in this location is even close to acceptable to any of you, is incomprehensible! We must have the right as a community to be presented the real facts surrounding this proposal before any access is granted and before the proponent can touch a single tree in Bala.

This proposed project would also:

- Make hundreds of feet of the limited public shoreline in Bala too dangerous to access
- Significantly reduce scenic flow over both Bala falls throughout most of the year to produce energy that is largely not required and will be sold off at a significant loss.
- Make all nearby in-water recreation and boating too dangerous
- Permanently eliminate the historic Bala Portage, while the alternate routes suggested by SREL are unacceptable as they are too dangerous or on private property.
- Deeply offend the Wahta Mohawks and other First Nations who are legally entitled to proper consultation regarding their historical portage site and the current proposal.
- Be remotely controlled offsite and would begin operation automatically and, without warning, even when people are nearby in the usually serene water
- Put control of the water levels for the Muskoka Lakes in the hands of a for-profit, private contractor
- Ruin the area's biggest tourist attraction – Muskoka is recognized as world-class by National Geographic, but there would no longer be a reason to include Bala in a Muskoka visit
- The literally bus-loads of tourists would go elsewhere, and other people wouldn't bother stopping, this would be a major negative impact on the area's economy
- Contribute directly to your rising hydro bill. The Auditor General of Ontario has found that over the past years, Ontario has had to export, at a loss, the surplus electricity from these renewable energy projects and this is costing Ontario residents billions of dollars.

Ted Farley

February 26, 2015