

June 25, 2009

Dear Editor

I would like to let you know that something very destructive is on the verge of happening in the beautiful Canadian Heritage of the Muskoka Lakes. **IT MUST BE STOPPED!** Please share this with your readers.

For generations, Canadians have made the journey north to vacation places on the beautiful shores of the Muskoka lakes, which were carved out of our unique Canadian Shield by glaciers about 20,000 years ago. Muskoka is a perfect recreation destination and is part of our heritage as Canadians and Ontarians. Maybe your family, or your friends and their families, are among them.

The bustling town of Bala, is a focal point of such journeys, and is a tourist hub in Muskoka.

At the very center of Bala flow the majestic Bala Falls. The Falls are the end point of the water system running down through Lake Muskoka into the Moon River. Tourists from all over the world come to see the spectacular water cascading endlessly. On any Summer day you'll see picnickers, swimmers, kids wading on the rocks, scuba-divers, people sight seeing and fishing. Boats cruise and dock above and below the falls - you can even shop for groceries by boat, and many do.

But now, this beautiful Canadian treasure is threatened with permanent devastation. With the endorsement of Ontario Government as part of their "Green Energy plan", a private power company, Swift River Energy Limited, comprised of four investors, are preparing to **jam a 4.5 Megawatt hydroelectric generating plant right into the falls**. Blasting is to begin as early as next year.

They want to blast a massive trench through the bedrock and divert an unbelievable **90% of the water** through their turbine, **reducing the cascade to a trickle!** A gigantic 18' by 33' concrete bunker, complete with parking, will monopolize the scenery. The water intake just downstream of the town docks and huge safety booms adjacent to the falls will end all recreation activities.

What else will result?

1. **As Part of the Impact of Construction** the 300' coffer dam needed will **destroy several fish habitats and spawning areas**, which were carefully established over the past two decades.
2. **Outrageous Cost.** Ontario Power Authority pays four times the current Ontario power price for Hydroelectric (water-generated) projects. **Four times.** 11-14 cents a kilowatt compared to 3.4 cents. **Who's going to pay for this subsidy????** Taxpayers. **Who's going to profit????** The four gentlemen of Swift River Energy Limited.
3. **Extreme Danger.** The recreational area will be rendered hazardous. The safety of children, boaters, swimmers and fishermen will be put into grave peril. Our own government even tells us **not to put hydroelectric plants in populated areas**. You've all seen the OPP/OPG television ads warning us that:
 - ◆ **Hydroelectric stations are NOT SAFE** for fishing, boating or swimming. **They are NOT SAFE** for camping, picnicking or scuba-diving **they are NOT SAFE** even for winter activities like snowmobiling or cross-country skiing.
 - ◆ **Why? Remotely operated facilities can't react to emergencies** - they cant see us! The on-demand operation will result in **often, sudden, changes in water levels and surges**. **We are told to stay FAR AWAY:** http://www.opg.com/pdf/watersafe_eng.pdf

So how much power is 4.5 Megawatts anyway? Only as much as two wind turbines generate. Only as much as is used by about 1,000 homes.

Do we NEED this tiny contribution? Let's put it into context: Ontario can currently generate **33,000 Megawatts**. You can see the sources of that power, how much we use (our demand is far less than 33,000 MW), and what we even **EXPORT** to the U.S. here: <http://www.ieso.ca/> Existing hydroelectric plants in Ontario, built at **remote** water locations, each make **more than 10 times the power** what Bala would, **and speaking of green energy**, Ontario leads the country in wind power, with over **700 MW** capacity and counting.

So, let's tally the cost of sacrificing an irreplaceable Natural Canadian Heritage site for the so-called benefit adding a very insignificant amount of power to the grid:

1. Majestic Bala Falls reduced permanently to a **10% trickle**
2. The view of this Natural Canadian Heritage site forever replaced by a **massive concrete bunker**
3. **Fish spawning beds** in Moon River **destroyed**
4. **The outrageous cost** of this power will be subsidized by you and me
5. Two years of Construction upheaval of the historic town of Bala
6. **And perhaps most importantly, a permanent end to recreation activities above and below the Falls, because of the shear danger created for children and families.**

Does Bala Falls need to be devastated for 4.5 MW of power? I don't think so.

Despite two years of hard work, including petitions, letter writing campaigns and presentations, the dedicated "**Save the Bala Falls**" group (<http://savethebalafalls.com/>) have not yet been able to convince Dalton McGuinty of the craziness of this plan. **We must continue the effort!**

Please send the message, "**Save the Bala Falls**" to:

- The Premier of Ontario, <https://www.premier.gov.on.ca/feedback/feedback.asp?Lang=EN>
- The Minister of Natural Resources, Donna Cansfield, dcansfield.mpp@lial.ola.org,
- The Minister of Energy and infrastructure, George Smitherman, gsmitherman.mpp@liberal.ola.org
- The Minister of the Environment, John Gerretsen, jgerretsen.mpp@liberal.ola.org
- Please also send a copy to info@SaveTheBalaFalls.com

It looks like the Government slogan '**Every Kilowatt Counts**' certainly **does not apply in Bala**, where **the end most definitely would not justify the means!**'

I appreciate your support!

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