Rally held in Bala to protest Premier Ford's broken campaign promise

Protesters gather in Bala on Saturday to rally against Premier Ford back-tracking on campaign promise to cancel power dam project. (CTV Barrie/Rob Cooper)

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Frustration is mounting in Bala, after Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced earlier this week that he was back-peddling on an election campaign promise to axe the local hydro-electric project.

The "Save the Bala Falls" movement has been active for at least ten years, and on Saturday, dozens of activists rallied at the construction site where the new project is being built by Swift River Energy.

"I'm not giving up. I don't think we'll ever give up," says protester Ruth Zavitz.

On February 27th, while he was campaigning for Ontario Progressive Conservative leadership, Ford met with residents on the banks of the Bala Falls, telling them he recognized that "the good people of this region do not want this project."

He said if he was elected Premier, he would cancel the construction of the power station.

Fast-forward six months to this past Wednesday in Milton, Ford announced that cancelling the project in the heart of Muskoka's lakes would cost "an absolute fortune."

"I consulted with residents, we put a small group together, and they seem to be pretty happy," Ford said.

However, the community group says the Ford government did not undertake local consultations.

"In the six weeks since the June election, the Premier's office has not been returning our calls and has not been interested in meeting with us," says Save the Bala Falls spokesperson Mitchell Shnier.

Shnier says he's still optimistic the Premier might accept a meeting to discuss cancelling the project, but says if it project goes ahead as planned, "we would be working to make sure it doesn't operate."

Ford says instead of nixing the project, his government will invest money in protecting the Muskoka watershed.

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