

February 21, 2019

Lisa Trevisan  
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Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks  
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Dear Ms. Trevisan:

## **Re: Proposed hydro-electric generating station at the Bala falls**

### **Summary**

The Minister of MECP's recent letter to me carefully avoided responding to the actual and most extreme of the dangers that would be created by the operation of the proposed hydro-electric generating station at the Bala falls, instead responding only about water levels and boating which are not the issue. The issue is people in the water, which is not prohibited.

Ignoring a deadly issue will not make it go away, and issuing the Permit to Take Water requested by the proponent would enable this risk to human life to proceed.

I request to meet with you to discuss these serious unaddressed issues, and how your Ministry's actions could be coordinated with some new information we will be presenting to the Ministry of Energy.

I look forward to your timely response.

### **Detail**

It is a fact that:

- Historical flow data from Environment Canada's water office shows that the proposed hydro-electric generating station at the Bala falls would run at its full 96 m<sup>3</sup>/s capacity an average of 21 days each summer. So the proponent's water velocities shown in our composite graphic, below, are valid. We have requested more than once that they detail any errors in our use of these values, but they have not provided any.
- In the past, almost all flow in the summer has been through the Bala south channel, but this would be changed by the operation of the proposed generating station so almost all flow would be through the Bala north channel, which is directly adjacent to the municipal Town Docks and the boat rental, creating new and extreme dangers for in-water recreation there.
- While safety booms are great for visibility, as reported by the Coroner for a drowning due to a hydro-electric generating station, "safety booms" actually create dangers as they tip boats held against them by the current, and the floats are too large to hold on to.

The most extreme risk would be to people in the water, for example because:

- 1) They fell out of a canoe or a kayak at the boat rental docks.
- 2) Their motor stalled approaching or leaving the Town Docks and their boat was drawn by the current to the upstream safety boom, where it was tipped by the current and the occupants did not know what to do.
- 3) They were Scuba diving off Diver's Point and were drawn downstream by the current created by the proposed generating station.

These are all legal activities, to be expected in a navigable waterway and there are no signs in the Bala north channel prohibiting anything. The Minister of MECP avoided responding to these most-extreme dangers in his February 6, 2019 letter, copy below, even though the MECP has the responsibility to protect human life, as stated in the Environmental Assessment Act and confirmed by the Environmental Review Tribunal when they cancelled the proposed Fairview Wind project.

As the upstream safety boom would actually be part of the danger (tipping boats and the floats being too large to hang on to), once these people are past the upstream safety boom, they would be at the proposed generating station's intake within 45 seconds, and that would be their end, as the station would have no local Operator or emergency stop button.

Issuing a Permit to Take Water would enable this deadly booby-trap.

I understand this is a complicated file and you have likely received conflicting or evasive responses from the proponent.

I therefore request to meet with you to discuss this further. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Mitchell Shnier, on behalf of SaveTheBalaFalls.com

Cc: Rick Roth, Chief of Staff, MECP, Rick.Roth@ontario.ca  
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