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12 April 2013

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Premier
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
Email: KWynne.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Dear Ms. Wynne:

Re: Urgent Meeting Request Concerning Community Say on Hydroelectric Projects

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization acting as a province-wide voice representing several groups, including the French River Delta Association, Council of Canadians, Friends of Temagami, Paddle Canada, Whitewater Ontario, Vermilion River Stewardship, Mississippi Riverwatchers, French River Stewardship, along with many other stewardships, associations, and private and First Nations citizens who have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems all across Ontario.

ORA is deeply concerned about the many hydroelectric projects that are being forced on Ontario communities – often against their expressed concerns over issues related to environmental damage, pollution, and health and safety.

In particular, ORA would like to draw your attention to over 40 hydroelectric developments that are currently moving forward through the approvals process. Many of these proposals are for cascading systems where there are two or more and as many as nine facilities on a single river, and/or are using harmful cycling and peaking operations to take advantage of the lucrative 50% peaking bonus. Most of these proposals use headponds to store water to maximize power generation, and there are numerous studies documenting a long list of negative impacts, including but not limited to:

- Increased nutrients such as nitrate, phosphorus
- ELA reports increases (10X to 20X) in both methyl mercury and greenhouse gases
- Increased mercury in fish tissue
- Sedimentation and erosion
- Warming of water in headponds
- Oxygen levels lowered
- Fish and eels killed in the turbines
- Fish migration and spawning fragmented
- Habitat destroyed

- Increased incidence of toxic Blue-green algae
- Threats to public health and safety

These impacts demonstrate that such projects are harmful to the environment and should not be considered “green”.

There have been a number of municipalities and First Nation communities that have gone so far as to pass motions, or to declare their rejections of local waterpower proposals, including:

- Nairn - Hyman Township
- Sables - Spanish Township
- Baldwin Township
- Municipality of Killarney
- Municipality of French River
- Town of Petawawa
- Henvey Inlet First Nation
- Fort Albany First Nation
- Kiishik Community Association

Communities need to have a determining say in whether they will allow their freshwater to be degraded, or will allow their family’s health and safety to be placed at risk. Another Walkerton situation is only a matter of time.

ORA would like to meet with you to discuss the numerous challenges our members are facing with a preapproved environmental assessment process where the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has stated that there is no possibility of a “no” outcome. Where the proponent calls all the shots and tells the public “it’s a done deal – you can’t stop us”. Where the fox is in charge of the chicken coop. Where communities have no power to stop a project that will impact on whether their fish are edible, their water is drinkable, or whether they can swim in the river.

Many of the rivers proposed for development flow through cities and communities where wastewater and mining effluent are being released into their waters, and are already experiencing blue-green algae blooms – even throughout the winter months. This is happening because of heavy development pressures, and these pressures are intensifying dramatically with the push for jobs, and the lucrative subsidies offered to corporations to produce power during peak demand hours. MNR and MOE staff have had their hands tied because of increased pressures from upper management to push these proposals through to completion.

ORA requests a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss our concerns and to find solutions to the ever-growing unrest amongst Ontario citizens over the lack of community input on important issues, such as hydroelectric development.

ORA understands that you are setting a new direction in working with communities across the province, and that you genuinely care about people and our democracy. We have heard you say many times that “communities must have a say” in whether they become the sacrificial lambs for the “green” energy agenda. You have given us hope that communities really matter.

ORA looks forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,



Linda Heron
Chair, Ontario Rivers Alliance

Cc: Honourable Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Energy – Minister.mah@ontario.ca
Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of Environment – Minister.moe@ontario.ca
Honourable David Oraziotti, Minister of Natural Resources - doraziotti.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org
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