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10 October 2012

Carrie Hoskins, Program Officer
Ministry of Natural Resources
Policy Division, Renewable Energy Program
300 Water Street, Floor 5
Robinson Place South Tower
Peterborough, Ontario
K9J 8M5

**Re: EBR Registry number 011-6005
Proposed Renewable Energy on Crown Land Policy**

Dear Ms. Hoskins:

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization with a focus on healthy river ecosystems all across Ontario. ORA members represent numerous organizations such as the French River Delta Association, Vermilion River Stewardship, CPAWS-Ottawa Valley, Friends of Temagami, Paddle Canada, Whitewater Ontario, Mississippi Mills Riverkeepers, along with many other stewardships, associations, and private and First Nations citizens, who have come together to support healthy river ecosystems in Ontario and to ensure that development affecting Ontario rivers is environmentally, ecologically and socially sustainable.

ORA wishes to make the following recommendations for the proposed Renewable Energy on Crown Land Policy:

- 1. Stakeholder and First Nation Consultation**
Municipal, public, stakeholder and First Nation consultation must be a mandatory part of this policy and process as all can be directly and seriously impacted by these renewable energy developments. The developer and agency staff could be saved expense and time if it was determined from the beginning that these projects are not feasible or wanted by the community.
- 2. Justified Need for Power**
Crown land should not be released for renewable energy unless there is a proven and undeniable need for the power generation.
- 3. Cumulative Effects**
Cumulative effects of all inputs and outputs on a river system must be assessed and weighed to determine the cost vs. the benefit.
- 4. Dam Decommissioning**

Crown land should not be released for development unless the developer has placed sufficient funds up front for future removal of the dam and restoration of the site.

Release of Crown land for renewable energy development must include provisions for dam decommissioning.

5. The Proposed Policy:

1.0 Introduction

The Ontario government has set their priorities for rectifying poor air quality at the expense of water quality and public health and safety. Clean air and clean water are both essential to life. Peaking and cycling operating strategies do not create clean energy, but instead produce dirty energy, and there are many studies that list the numerous negative impacts associated with these types of dams.ⁱ MNR has several of their own studies which indicate numerous negative impacts associated with hydroelectric dams.ⁱⁱ

5.0 Goal

If balancing the social, economic, and ecological interests of the Province is truly MNR's goal, then there should be no peaking or cycling allowed for any of these hydroelectric proposals. Many of these rivers run through cities, towns, communities, and First Nation traditional territory, which rely on them for their drinking water, fisheries, recreation, tourism, and economic development. Hydroelectric dams using peaking and cycling strategies rely on holding ponds, which are well studied and known to increase mercury levels in fish tissue, and the extreme and rapid changes in flow velocity and water levels place public safety at risk.

6.1.4

Even true run-of-river hydroelectric dams result in negative impacts, but because of the numerous negative impacts associated with peaking and cycling operations, this type of generation must be removed from the Green Energy Act, and not even be an option for development on crown land.

Crown land should not be released for peaking and cycling hydroelectric facilities.

6.2.3

Crown Land adjacent or close to parks (or other protected areas) should not be made available for energy development because development of such sites will inevitably affect the parks ecosystem.

6.2.4

This is not just a southern Ontario issue, but is equally a northern Ontario issue as well. Impacts on stakeholders and communities must also be a serious consideration in releasing Crown land to developers, and should be included in this section, as their health and safety are directly impacted by these projects.

6.3.3

Renewable energy and optimization of energy potential must not take precedence or be placed above environmental impacts and public health and safety.

6.3.4

This is already a streamlined process – streamlining makes it easier for developers but

places the environment and public health and safety last. This is unacceptable.

Streamlining of policy and process must not take precedence over public consultation and participation. This process must be fully transparent with full disclosure of all information.

6.3.5

There is no fee that is worth the destruction of a riverine ecosystem or the life of a stakeholder.

6.4 – Aboriginal Communities

Community economic benefits should be encouraged in all waterpower development. Community must not be just a few who have the money to invest, but the entire community/municipality/First Nation should receive a portion of the revenue from power generation. There must be full transparency with effective consultation throughout this process.

6.7.3 – Science, Research & Information

MNR recently commissioned a study “in support the Green Energy Act” that was so narrowly focused that it did not take into account any of the negative impacts of waterpower facilities. The result was a report that was grossly exaggerated, inaccurate and misleading, and did not meet their responsibility of due diligence. These types of narrow and tailor made studies are unacceptable from an agency with a mandate of *providing for the protection, conservation and wise management in Ontario of the environment*”, and must not be repeated.

MNR staff have consistently maintained that Q80 is sufficient flow to protect the environment and ecosystem, and yet in “optimization of the energy potential of a site” staff are being pressured to negotiate for much lower environmental and compensatory flows – this is unacceptable.

Decisions must be made based on authentic science, research and best practices, not on political and/or economic pressures from the upper levels of government that are designed to inflate green energy statistics.

On individual proposals, science and research should be commissioned by MNR staff, or by an independent source that has nothing to gain or lose by any project or policy going forward. The same consultants should not be used over and over as it creates an atmosphere of wanting to please the customer in order to receive more work. MNR should be reimbursed by the developer for any assistance provided on a proposal.

6. Installed Capacity vs. Actual Power Generated

When government agencies refer to the amount of power generated, it is important to always refer to actual power that will be generated, and not installed capacity. Installed capacity can never be achieved in any type of renewable energy project because of seasonal flows, intermittent winds, and the sun doesn't shine 24/7.

Using Installed Capacity numbers is very deceiving to the public, and total numbers of power generated must be the key number relayed to the public - not installed capacity.

7. Waterpower is not “clean” Energy

MNR must stop referring to waterpower as “clean” – it is not – even true run-of-river hydroelectric generation has negative impacts associated with it. Hydro is not clean if turbines kill fish, dams fragment habitat, and reduce water quality and water quantity.

MNR does not have a good track record on requiring effective mitigation of hydro effects on the environment, so what assurance do we have that it will be any better this time around. A gold rush mentality has been created with an anything goes attitude. So, let's take this opportunity to correct past mistakes.

Summary:

ORA requests that the Renewable Energy on Crown Land Policy Review take into account the communities and stakeholders that will have to live with the impacts of these hydroelectric dams. Public consultation must be a mandatory component before releasing Crown Land to developers.

A provincial strategy for waterpower development is needed. A strategy that examines the full range of impacts before a site is released to developers, to look at where it makes ecological sense to build hydroelectric dams vs. where it does not make sense. Crown lands are held in trust for the people of Ontario – and therefore they must be effectively and transparently consulted before disposing of a waterpower site.

Ontario has a surplus of power, and as stated in a report by George Vegh, Chair of the Electricity market Forum, “*The supply-side challenge now is therefore not driven by the need to procure new generation capacity, but to manage supply to meet the needs of electricity customers*”, and “*under the Medium Growth scenario, the forecast for demand is flat and it is not until 2027 that peak demand is expected to grow by 1,000 MW. Even under the High Growth scenario, peak demand does not grow by 1,000 MW until 2022. Under the Low Growth scenario – which appears to be higher than where demand is trending – peak demand does not increase by 1000 MW prior to the end of the Plan term (2030).*”ⁱⁱⁱ

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,



Linda Heron
Chair, Ontario Rivers Alliance

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ⁱ **Environment Canada. 2001. Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Ecosystem Health in Canada.** - National Water Research Institute, Burlington, Ontario. NWRI Scientific Assessment Report Series No. 1. 72p. - Page 69 – 15. **Impacts of Dams/Diversions and Climate Change**

ⁱⁱ **Kerr, S.J. 1995. Silt, turbidity and suspended sediments in the aquatic environment: an annotated bibliography and literature review.** Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Southern Region Science & Technology Transfer Unit Technical Report TR-008. 277 pp.

ⁱⁱⁱ Reconnecting Supply and Demand, How Improving Electricity Pricing can Help Integrate a Changing Supply Mix, Increase Efficiency and Empower Customers. Report of the Chair of the Electricity Market Forum, George Vegh, December 2011, P-3 & 4.