

April 18, 2016

The Honourable Glen R. Murray
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
11th Floor, Ferguson Block
77 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2T5

Dear Minister Murray,

The Muskoka Lakes Association is the oldest and largest cottager association in Ontario and represents over 2,300 families. We have a number of key areas on which we focus our attention and represent our members. The environment is certainly a priority of the Association and its members. We are writing to express our concern about the potential for flooding during the construction of the Bala power plant. First, please let us know to whom in your Ministry we should be addressing our future letters on this issue.

We understand that:

- A developer, Swift River Energy, plans to build a generating station in Bala (see <http://balafalls.ca>), and that during some of the construction period there would be a coffer dam blocking all flow through the Bala north channel for most of a year, such as from June through February,
- Past history has shown there is more than a 20% chance that heavy precipitation during this time the north channel is fully blocked would result in flooding of Lake Muskoka (see <http://savethebalafalls.com/?p=4869>),
- While the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has a plan to lower this coffer dam, this plan could not be implemented for the majority of the time as the construction excavation would allow the flow to bypass the Bala north dam.

It causes us great concern that this flooding risk has not been made known to the public by either the developer or your Ministry, as I understand detailing such risks and their mitigation is a main purpose of the environmental assessment process. We are further concerned that for their environmental approval the proponent showed they would not fully block the Bala north channel but now would fully block it – and do not have environmental approval for this change which also creates much of the risk of flooding Lake Muskoka.

Of course, we understand that flooding can always occur due to natural causes, but for flooding of thousands of private properties, docks, and boat houses to result from a developer's changed plans, for these changed plans to not have environmental approval, and for this risk to not be communicated to the public is unacceptable.

Could you reply to the following:

1. Will your Ministry require, before any construction is allowed to begin, that the public be informed of the risks of flooding Lake Muskoka due to the developer's current construction plans,
2. Will your Ministry allow public comment on the plans to address these flooding risks, and require issues raised by the public be resolved before any construction is allowed to begin.

We would appreciate you letting us know to whom in your Ministry we should be addressing our future letters on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Hart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Hart,
President

Cc: The Honourable Bill Mauro, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry,
BMauro.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org