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27 May 2013

The Honourable Bob Chiarelli  
Minister of Energy  
Hearst Block, 4th Floor  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 2E1  
Email: [Minister.mah@ontario.ca](mailto:Minister.mah@ontario.ca)

Dear Minister Chiarelli:

**Re: Meeting Request**

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization acting as a voice for the French River Delta Association, CPAWS-OV, Council of Canadians, Kiishik Community Association, Food & Water First, Whitewater Ontario, Vermilion River Stewardship, Mississippi Riverwatchers, French River Stewardship, as well as 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.

I am writing on behalf of ORA to request a meeting with you to begin a dialogue in the hopes of resolving several issues and concerns that have taken on a sense of urgency, with a total of 41 waterpower proposals currently moving through the approvals process, of which three are awaiting a decision from the Minister of Environment on Part II Order requests.

ORA is very concerned about the numerous and well documented impacts that these hydroelectric proposals will have on our water quality, water quantity, fisheries, riverine ecosystems, biodiversity, recreation and tourism, the Great Lakes and, most importantly, on public health and safety.

Recent studies report that wetlands<sup>1</sup> and boreal upland forests<sup>2</sup> flooded to create headponds can result in dramatic increases, by 10 to 20 times, in both methylmercury and greenhouse gases<sup>3</sup>. Many hydroelectric dams are proposed on rivers running through cities, towns, and reserves which are used to dilute wastewater and mining effluent, and contain heavily

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<sup>1</sup> [The Rise and Fall of Mercury Methylation in an Experimental Reservoir<sup>†</sup>](#), DOI: 10.1021/es034424f

<sup>2</sup> [Impacts of Reservoir Creation on the Biogeochemical Cycling of Methyl Mercury and Total mercury in Boreal Upland Forests](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Processes affecting greenhouse gas production in experimental boreal reservoirs](#), DOI: 10.1002/gbc.20046

contaminated sediment, at a time when local communities are already struggling with blue-green algae blooms threatening their drinking water.

These waterpower proposals are being sold as clean green energy, and yet they will use cycling and peaking operating strategies to take advantage of the 50% peaking bonus offered to developers to produce power during peak demand hours. This lucrative incentive encourages developers to create headponds to maximize power generation to quench their natural thirst to maximize profits. This incentive is the only thing making many of these smaller rivers viable, but even these incentives cannot make power generation profitable when flows on these smaller rivers continue to be reduced by climate change.

Flows are predicted to significantly decrease in volume over the 40 year life of these Contracts, and this is especially disturbing since none of these proposals include up-front decommissioning provisions for dam removal if they are no longer socially, environmentally or economically viable.

Ban Ki-moon reported that, *“Unless greater efforts are made to reverse current trends, the world will run out of freshwater.”* *“Although seemingly abundant, only a tiny amount of the water on our planet is easily available as freshwater.”* *“Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides are central to achieving the vision of a water secure world.”*<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, why are we moving forward with securing more generation when it is well reported that Ontario has surplus generation. George Vegh, Chair of the Electricity market Forum, reported, *“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).”*<sup>5</sup>

Ontario has an extensive history of hydroelectric dam development, where the damage inflicted by these dams has led to the extinction and extirpation of many aquatic species. The first defaunation of Ontario streams was due to the mill dams that caused the extinction of Lake Ontario Salmon, and doubtless many other lesser migratory populations that weren't so well documented; and twentieth century hydro dams have devastated many other species such as the American Eel and Lake Sturgeon. The numerous problems with hydroelectric have not gone away, and these operating strategies devised to take advantage of peak demand have only served to increase the potential for negative impacts.

We all want green energy, but let's ensure we are implementing authentic and fully sustainable green energy projects that don't increase the incidence of toxic blue-green algae, stir up contaminated sediment, increase fish consumption restrictions, degrade water quality, and place public health and safety at further risk.

ORA is committed to working with this government to resolve these issues and concerns, and looks forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience.

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<sup>4</sup> [New York, 21 May 2013 - Secretary-General's message on the International Day for Biological Diversity, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General, United Nations](#)

<sup>5</sup> [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 and 4.](#)

Respectfully,



Linda Heron  
Chair, Ontario Rivers Alliance

Cc: Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier – [Premier@ontario.ca](mailto:Premier@ontario.ca)  
Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of Environment - [Minister.moe@ontario.ca](mailto:Minister.moe@ontario.ca)  
Honourable David Oraziotti – Minister of Natural Resources – [Minister.mnr@ontario.ca](mailto:Minister.mnr@ontario.ca)