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Ontario NDP Caucus • Groupe parlementaire du NPD de l'Ontario

Bonnie Lysyk
Auditor General of Ontario
Suite 1530 – 20 Dundas Street West
Toronto ON M5G 2C2

Dear Ms. Lysyk,

On December 6, 2019, the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks issued a decision to revoke the Renewable Energy Approval for the Nation Rise Wind Farm project in the Municipality of North Stormont. That decision means wind turbines already built or partially built are being torn down, because the project no longer has approval under the *Environmental Protection Act*.

Nation Rise Wind Farm is a 29-wind turbine, 100-megawatt wind energy project that had been under construction since May 2019. At the time the approval was revoked, 16 of the 29 wind turbines had already been fully or partially erected, and the construction was expected to be completed in February 2020.

The Minister's stated reason for revoking the approval was due to concerns that the project will have "serious and irreversible" negative impacts on local bat populations. However, the Environmental Review Tribunal, the body responsible for hearing the appeal against the project's approval, and the Ministry both determined that the project posed no risk to the bat population. In fact, those appealing the wind farm's approval offered no expert testimony at the Tribunal that the bat population is at risk nor was the matter raised in the appeal submission to the Minister.

Since the revocation, EDP Renewables, the company behind the project, declared publicly that they are "assessing all potential legal action" and has since sought a judicial review of the decision. The company alleges that the Minister "didn't use science" and "abused the process" when making his determination, and are therefore looking for a judge to overturn the decision.

This is not the first time that this government cancelled renewable energy projects that were already well underway. So far, the government has admitted that they spent \$231 million this fiscal year in compensation costs because of cancelling renewable energy contracts. Additionally it has been reported that the cost of cancelling the White Pines wind energy project, a project that was not as far along in development as the Nation Rise project, will be at least \$100 million.

Ontario NDP Caucus Services

Main Legislative Building, Room N200 • Queen's Park • Toronto, ON M7A 1A8 • ondpcaucus.com



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Given the significant costs to taxpayers when energy contracts are cancelled, I request that your office review the costs associated with cancelling the Nation Rise Wind Farm project at this late stage in its construction. Additionally I request that your office, in your new role as Commissioner of the Environment, conduct a review of the decision making process that led to the revocation of the project's approvals, including any scientific evidence the Minister used to justify his government's decision to scrap this renewable energy project.

Sincerely,

Peter Tabuns
MPP Toronto-Danforth