

An Open Letter to Residents of Almonte from Jeff Cavanagh

Over the past few months, there has been a lot of discussion surrounding potential impacts that an expanded generating station at 11 Main Street will have on the local economy and the environment. Some of the discussions and arguments have been very useful and contributed to the final Environmental Assessment (EA) Report and the Heritage Impact Assessment.

As the owner of Enerdu, I have been surprised by some of the comments expressed. I have heard some residents comment that since—in their opinion—the expansion will presumably have no benefit to Almonte, it should not go ahead. First of all, there will be benefits for Almonte—but as I thought about this sentiment I wondered what this province would look like if every village, town and city took the same position. Hydro-electric power is the most environmentally clean and sustainable energy we have. Each kilowatt of power produced at 11 Main Street is a kilowatt that does not need to be generated using either natural gas or nuclear fusion. Protecting the environment is good for everyone, including the residents of Almonte.

As far as the local economy is concerned, it is again important to remember our shared history. 11 Main Street has been a commercial/industrial hub since the mid 1880s, and water has been harnessed from the Mississippi River for industrial use since 1821 when the first sawmill was built in Almonte. Industrial uses of the river in Almonte are nothing new and Almonte would not exist today without them.

As we all know, commercial operations may generate activity that can have an impact on residents and tourism. In Almonte however, this commercial hub has comfortably existed side by side with the town's businesses and tourism sector for the past 130 years. For over 30 years, the generating plant has produced clean energy at this location, but the plant now needs to be updated and improved with more efficient generators and a better weir system.

I understand the importance of tourism and a healthy local economy and believe this project will have very few impacts on either. Our consultants have worked hard and taken into consideration the comments from the public in their final EA and Heritage Impact Report. There is no doubt the project will change the view from the opposite side of the Mississippi River and following the comments received from the public, our consultants modified the engineering designs to address many concerns. These changes included bringing the footprint of the set of three weirs into better alignment with the existing weirs, eliminating most changes to the existing waterfall terrace near the Small Island, and allowing more water to flow over the intake canal wall and weirs in most waterflow conditions.

With the construction of the new weirs, the exposed riverbed will look almost the same as it does now, but the appearance of the area will be altered. In low water periods, the new weirs will be almost completely exposed (as the weir is today); the new gates will also be visible. In other periods, water spilling over the gate will also flow over the concrete, thereby hiding the concrete base and minimizing the aesthetic impact of the concrete weir.

The construction of the powerhouse will also change the perceived width of the river channel. At present, the distance separating the flume of the current powerhouse and the retaining wall along the edge of the Barley Mow property is 54.5 m. With the construction of the new powerhouse, this distance will be reduced to 39 m.

While the power plant will require more water to increase power generation, the new technically-advanced gates will better assist in flood control for the Mississippi River and will be able to respond quickly to any flooding conditions upstream. As any resident in Almonte knows, the flow of the Mississippi varies greatly from season to season and this will not change with the expansion of the existing generating station.

Construction for the expanded generating station will also provide employment for workers and local businesses and suppliers.

I believe an expanded generating plant, as currently outlined in our completed EA report will have no significant negative impacts on the river view and will have no impact on Almonte's tourism sector. The new weir system will better assist in flood control on the river and the expanded generating station will be an interesting addition to the town's cultural and architectural history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Cavanagh", written over a white background.

Jeff Cavanagh
Enerdu Power Systems Inc.