

Chibougamau, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003

VIA EMAIL

Honorable Eleanor Stein  
Administrative Law Judge  
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Case 03-E-0188 – Proceeding on Motion of the Commission Regarding a  
Retail Renewable Portfolio Standard.

Honorable Judge Stein,

Rupert Reverence wishes to submit a comment in order not to include the hydroelectric power from Hydro-Quebec in the New York Renewable Portfolio Standard.

We are a non-profit organization from Quebec, Canada founded in 2001 by men and women active in their communities and deeply convinced that there is much more to lose than to be gained with hydroelectric projects in *Eeyou Istchee* / James Bay territory in Quebec, Canada. Our members and sympathizers include Quebecers and Crees but also Canadians from other provinces, Americans, and Europeans. All share a solid attachment, both rational and deeply felt to the Northern Quebec Rivers.

Here is why we think the hydroelectricity should not be part of the Renewable portfolio:

**1) From the environmental standpoint**, hydroelectricity was considered over last century as a clean, renewable source of energy. The most recent scientific studies today reverse this belief and prove that the impacts of dams on ecosystems are profound, complex, varied, multiple and essentially negative. The glory days of hydroelectricity, once the pride of Quebecers, are behind us; in developed countries, the trend is already in the decommissioning of dams and reservoirs to restore the natural flow of rivers. Rupert Reverence deals with the impacts to be expected on the habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity of James Bay, where the big hydroelectric projects all are.

**2) From an economic and political perspective**, Considering the uncertain profitability of Hydro-Québec exports, its poor performance in terms of conservation and energy efficiency, and especially an unacceptable provincial policy on energy. Millions of dollars have already been spent on a project not yet approved. And what is to be said about the conflicting position of the provincial government, owner of Hydro-Quebec, interested in profit making and easily forgetting environmental and sustainable development issues? And selling hydroelectricity to the United States has no reciprocity. What would the state of New York sell back to insure a commercial balance in this deal?

**3) From a regional development standpoint**, hydroelectric projects threaten the sustainable development of a region by destroying what it has best to offer. The creation of temporary employment and the local economic boom, once past, will leave Cree and Jamesian families poorer than ever. Nowhere in the world has construction of dams brought sustainable economic prosperity in its vicinity.

**4) From the recreo-tourism standpoint**, the hydro-electric installations will have the effect of sabotaging the promising tourism and recreation industry in James Bay. With its extraordinary landscapes, the Rupert River has carved itself a continental reputation with canoe and kayak enthusiasts. Its indigenous speckled trout presents the best genetic stock in the world. Its limpid water is drunk without prior treatment, its almost virgin habitats and the possibility of contact with Native communities make it an ecotourism destination of great promise on the international market.

**5) From an anthropological and sociological perspective**, a majority of Cree justifiably worry about the prejudice and turmoil that the dismantling of ancestral territory will bring to bear upon their way of life and their collective future. The sacrifice of ancestral values that have ensured their survival over millenia, having to bear the odious responsibility for the destruction of this extraordinary river and the slow but efficient poison of the sums of money awaited bring little hope for the social problems that overwhelm the Cree communities. Remember the courage and determination of the New France *coureurs des bois* have also left on the Rupert's shores a heritage of great value.

**6) From awe, purely and simply**, spring the best reasons to protect the Rupert: those that the River whisper in the ear of the passer-by, telling dimensions of grandeur, beauty, sacredness, using a universal language too scarcely heard. A state of reverence comes from within, but the farther you go from the river, the more its potent reality fades away... It becomes so easy to map diversions, dams and to consider rivers as faraway, virtual objects. Rupert Reverence's objective is to bring the river closer to the people, and the people closer to the river, for one to contact its vital essence, to understand its balance, its millenary purpose in an environment seemingly robust yet so fragile. And to give rise to a collective desire to shield her against short sighted exploitation appetites and suspicious financial and political interests. As a natural wonder, it also belongs to humankind as a whole. The Rupert is not for sale or for exchange as part of any deal. Quebec politicians as well as Hydro-Quebec would like you to believe that you have no say in it.

**7) There are other better ways to produce electricity**: from the wind, from the sun, from the tides. Let's put the great minds of this time to find solutions (many already exist) to decrease our energy consumption, to increase productivity of alternative renewable means to produce electricity.

As natural wonders, Rivers belongs to humankind as a whole. The Rupert and the other rivers are not for sale or for exchange as part of any deal. Quebec politicians as well as Hydro-Quebec would like you to believe that you have no say in it. The sustainable development of James Bay is

a major issue about which nobody has really been consulted yet, and about which nobody has really even been informed. Yet, hydroelectric projects represent a 10 billion \$ investment of public funds that will literally rape our collective heritage and deprive the generations to come of what James Bay has best to offer.

For the generations to come, from this country as well as the others, please put in the Retail renewable portfolio ways to produce energy that will not flood lands, destroy entire habitats, and comprise the way of life of the Crees, a life they have shared with the rivers from the beginning.

Best regards,

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