

Testimony of
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First Selectman

Town of Canton Connecticut
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Before the Subcommittee on Water and Power, United States Senate

Hearing on
S.715, to reinstate and transfer certain hydroelectric licenses and extend the
deadline for commencement of construction of certain hydroelectric projects.

June 23, 2011

Chairman Shaheen and Members of the Subcommittee on Water and Power my name is Richard J. Barlow and I am the First Selectman of the Town of Canton, a small town of 10,125 residents located on the Farmington River in northwestern Connecticut. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to support S. 715, a bill to reinstate and transfer certain hydroelectric licenses and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of certain hydroelectric projects (the Collinsville Renewable Energy Promotion Act). The Town would like to acknowledge the co-sponsors of this bill, Senators Lieberman and Blumenthal. With the support of Representative Murphy similar legislation was passed last Session by the House of Representatives. Currently, a companion bill, HR. 1353 is before the House of Representatives this Session.

The Collinsville Hydro Project will reactivate two hydroelectric facilities known as the Upper Collinsville Dam and the Lower Collinsville Dam originally constructed by the Collins Company, one of the nation's first manufacturers of axes, machetes, and other cutting tools. The facilities were constructed in the early 19th century and served to provide power for the Company operations until the mid 1960's when their operations were relocated to Central America. In 1965 the Connecticut Light & Power Company acquired the facilities and dams. They then deactivated the facilities, removed the generating equipment and gifted the dams to the State of Connecticut.

The Town of Canton in partnership with the Metropolitan District Commission, a Hartford area drinking water and sewer authority, attempted to re-activate the dams in the 1980's. While that attempt failed, the data they developed in part served as the basis for an application by a private company which successfully obtained a FERC license in 2003. Unable to obtain an agreement from the State to lease the dams and possibly for other unknown reasons the licensee failed to start construction. In January 2008 after issuance of a notice to revoke the licenses to which the licensee did not respond, FERC did, in fact, revoke the license for the project.

At that time, the Town of Canton began to consider re-activating the facilities. That action resulted in the Town filing for a preliminary FERC license on August 6, 2008. The Lower Collinsville Dam is actually in the Towns of Avon and Burlington and the Town of Canton has solicited their participation to develop and operate that portion of the Project. FERC issued by order a preliminary license to the Town of Canton on January 8, 2009.

Understanding that Congress has in the past reinstated and transferred licenses to other parties the Town began to work with our Congressional delegation to seek the reissuance of the final license to the Town of Canton. After extensive consultation with stakeholders including local environmental groups and the State Department of Environmental Protection Representative Murphy and Senator Dodd submitted bills to accomplish that task. Unfortunately last

Session the Senate did not take action on the proposed legislation before adjournment.

Since that time, the Town has established an advisory committee to define the Project. The Town envisions the Project as a way to re-establish a part of the culture and heritage of our community, a way to improve the environment by providing fish passage at the dams and, of course, an opportunity to provide a source of clean, green energy which will reduce our dependence on foreign energy sources.

Clearly, at a generating capacity of less than two mega watts, the Project is not the answer all our nation's energy needs, but it will provide the Towns with a source to meet the majority of their public facility needs.

In the past two years, the Town has been successful in obtaining State legislation requiring the State Commissioner of Environmental Protection to provide the Towns access to the dams for the purposes of hydroelectric power generation with the provision that fish passage be established. The Town has considered fish passage to be an important component of the project development. Without this project, the State would not be able to provide the monies to accomplish that task. Local environmental groups have recognized that the State does not have monies to accomplish fish passage by construction of fish ladders or the breeching of the dams.

The Connecticut General Assembly, just this past month, enacted legislation to allow for municipalities to use virtual net metering for clean energy projects. This action, which the Town of Canton championed, greatly increases the potential to make the Project economically feasible. The State of Connecticut has also recently established a funding program for clean energy projects which the Town expects to pursue.

In the last year with \$50,000 in funding from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund the Town was able to contract with a consultant who performed a preliminary feasibility study of the Project. With the ability to use virtual net metering the Project has reached a point where the Towns may expect a modest return on their investment in the initial years of operation.

In closing I thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify before you. I would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have regarding our Project.