



CALLING SAVE GEORGIAN BAY SUPPORTERS:

IT'S TIME TO FIGHT BACK!

TC Energy is pressuring Meaford Council to change the make-up and mandate of a community advisory committee designed to give taxpayers a voice on the impact of the company's proposed \$4.5 billion pumped storage project. In a February 12th letter, TC Energy's John Mikkelsen scolded council for seeking volunteers to serve on the newly-created committee without consulting the company—or giving TC Energy a seat.

But why should the \$55-billion Calgary-based corporation have a say on a committee specifically set up to allow residents' input on the impact of its controversial proposal? And why would Meaford Council appear so cowed by his angry letter that it put off a vote to set up the committee for two weeks?

"This amounts to interference with council's role of governance," says Tom Buck of the Meaford-based opposition group, Save Georgian Bay. "This is a public process and TC Energy already seems to have plenty of influence over council."

Known for playing hardball, the company has already won a series of contentious victories. After Mikkelsen warned that TC Energy would fund substantial economic benefits for Meaford "if—and only if" the town endorsed the project, council chose to ignore a hand-signed petition from 3,300 opponents and voted 5-2 to declare the town a conditional "willing host."

Council promptly hired a company to negotiate with TC Energy on the town's behalf for those benefits: StrategyCorp, whose former chair is now one of TC Energy's directors and whose costs the company agreed to underwrite.

Now on the first anniversary of those moves, TC Energy is trying to muscle in on the nine-member Pumped Storage Advisory Committee specifically created to give the community a say on the project's benefits and risks. But it's doubtful Mikkelsen objected to the seats reserved for Meaford's Chamber of Commerce and its youth. As originally



advertised, the committee also includes at least two seats each for Save Georgian Bay—our Meaford-based volunteer opposition group—and the 300 property owners whose homes, farms and cottages lie in the “impact zone” below the Defence Department base on the Niagara Escarpment where TC Energy plans to excavate a 375-acre reservoir.

Those residents have raised alarms that, if the dam leaked, overflowed or was breached, their properties could be damaged or washed away in a catastrophic flood. None would likely have been able to obtain flood insurance.

Among other risks Mikkelsen may not want council or the public to hear:

- Pumping 23 billion litres of Georgian Bay water up the escarpment to the reservoir every night, then releasing it to generate electricity every day threatens the entire aquatic eco-system and fresh water resource of the bay.
- TC Energy, formerly known as TransCanada Pipelines, has one of the worst safety records of any U.S. pipeline company. In December 2022, its Keystone Pipeline spilled 13,000 barrels of tar sands crude into a Kansas creek, with clean-up costs of \$480 million (US). Investigators found the company had increased pressure in the pipeline above normally-allowed stress rates, but TC Energy blamed the leak on shifting land and faulty construction. The company’s core competence is pipeline construction. TC Energy has never built a pumped storage project before.
- TC Energy’s model for the Meaford project is the continent’s second-largest pumped storage plant in Ludington, Michigan. Opened in 1973, Ludington is classified a “high-hazard dam” whose failure would “cause significant damage to property and loss of life.” According to its emergency action plan, a full breach would flood property half a mile away to a depth of two feet within five minutes.



- It took a 12-year lawsuit to stop Ludington’s turbines from killing 150 million fish a year. A 1994 settlement awarded \$5 million to a Great Lakes Fishery Trust and ordered the plant to install a two-kilometre net across its intake pipes to reduce that massive fish kill. Last year, a spokesman told *The Narwhal* that 91 percent of fish bigger than five inches are no longer sucked in, but had no comment on smaller fish.
- Ludington’s spokesman also told *The Narwhal* that the reservoir dam suffered from “small leakages,” but claimed local farmers found them “helpful” to water their fields.
- Now undergoing a \$500 million upgrade, Ludington’s owners are suing Toshiba for faulty work affecting shaft seals and five turbines.
- Given those technical and environmental challenges, no new pumped storage plants have been built in North America since 2010. As one utility spokesman pointed out, “It doesn’t make financial sense.” Ontario’s Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) agrees, twice ruling that TC Energy’s proposal has no net economic benefit.
- TC Energy claims its project will create 1,000 well-paying, unionized construction jobs. But a Ludington contractor says most of its construction workforce was short-term and came from out of town, while creating pressure on local housing and schools.

Whether TC Energy can keep those critiques from being aired by the proposed community advisory committee remains to be seen. But if councillors once again capitulate to the company’s pressure tactics, Meaford residents have every right to raise an awkward question: Who’s running this town?



Save Georgian Bay is urging supporters to **write councillors or turn up at the next council meeting at 1 p.m. Monday, February 26th at 157859 7th Line** to voice their objections to TC Energy's interference with a citizens' advisory group. Also, please join our fight at Save Georgian Bay's POLAR DIP on Saturday February 24th at 1 p.m. at Meaford's Fred Raper Park polardip.savegeorgianbay.ca or DONATE at smallchangefund.ca/project/save-the-bay/

TOGETHER, LET'S FIGHT TC ENERGY AND SAVE THE BAY!