

December 22, 2023

**\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\***

## Ford Government's Massive \$4B+ Energy Storage Project Deal Stinks Like the Greenbelt Scandal

*Proposed TC Energy Ontario Pumped Storage Project Another Example  
Ontario Place Tricks and "Pattern of No Consultation"*

If developed, the open-loop Ontario Pumped Storage Project ("the Project") would be co-located on the existing Canadian Army's 4th Canadian Division Training Centre, north of Meaford, Ontario. To function, the facility must pump 23 billion litres of water 150 metres up the Niagara Escarpment, dumping it into a 375 acre reservoir, and releasing it daily back into Georgian Bay. For context, that's 9,200 Olympic sized swimming pools worth of water in a hole the size of Toronto's High Park being flushed back down the escarpment every day.

"The Project would cause significant and irreversible environmental harm to the escarpment and Georgian Bay", warns Tom Buck of Save Georgian Bay. "The mitigation measures suggested by TC Energy are simply not enough to prevent fish kill and protect the environment."

Department of National Defence ("DND") internal documents, obtained through a federal Access to Information Process ("ATIP") request, reveal that there are up to 30 species at risk on the 4th Canadian Division Training Centre property, and up to 20 species at risk within the proposed project location. DND cautions that "the proposed project is estimated to devastate approximately 10% of the 4th Canadian Division Training Centre wildlife with direct effects alone."

In their November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting with the Minister of Energy, Save Georgian Bay asked the Minister how he would ensure that the environment is protected. Minister of Energy Todd Smith passed the buck to his colleagues in the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, saying that he would "rely on the environmental assessment process" to protect the environment.

"These assessments would not be reliable given that they would be completed by TC Energy," said Buck. "Not only are TC Energy biased as the Project's proponent, they are also one of Canada's worst polluters!" he added. Buck is also concerned about the Ford Government's environmental track record. "What is stopping the Ford Government from pulling the same tricks here as with Ontario Place, where they have conveniently determined that private projects on federal land are exempt from environmental assessments?" asks Buck. He is referring to new legislation that will

provide exemptions for the redevelopment of Ontario Place on a number of fronts, including environmental assessments. The legislation is being described as the Ford Government overriding its own rules to avoid accountability under the law. “We’re being asked to put our blind faith in a company and a government who can't be trusted and who have demonstrated time and time again that they don't care about the environment” Buck cautions.

Save Georgian Bay is not alone in its concerns. The recent Auditor General report found the Ford government has a "pattern of no consultation" on Ontario Energy policies, a violation of the Environmental Bill of Rights. Additionally, in the last few weeks, both the Township of The Archipelago and the Town of the Blue Mountains have passed motions in opposition to the Project. “Save Georgian Bay applauds these townships for their environmental stewardship in the protection of the environment,” said Buck. “Now that the Township of The Archipelago and the Town of the Blue Mountains have made their concerns public, we’re asking every community to take a close look at this deal. We expect that other municipalities will prioritize protecting Georgian Bay by making similar resolutions,” he added.

Despite the ongoing and mounting criticism of the Project, it has yet to be shut down. “How could it still be under consideration?” asks Buck. Save Georgian Bay questions whether the project is being driven by backroom deals, much like what happened with the Greenbelt scandal. “There are close ties between TCE’s primary lobbyists, Rubicon Strategy and Sussex Strategy Group, and Ontario’s political leaders,” says Buck. Indeed, Rubicon Strategy is headed by Kory Teneycke who served as Premier Doug Ford’s Campaign Manager. Minister Smith’s Chief of Staff, David Donovan, came to the Minister’s office from Sussex Strategy whose executives, Chris Benedetti and Paul Pellegrini have close ties to both the Minister and the Premier. “We can’t think of any other reason the Project, which is bad for Ontarians and bad for the environment, would still be under consideration.

-30-

Save Georgian Bay is a volunteer group of concerned citizens that oppose the TC Energy Ontario Pumped Storage Project, a massive open-loop energy storage facility in Meaford Ontario, due to the significant and irreversible environmental harm to the escarpment and Georgian Bay it would cause.

Further information is available from:

Tom Buck, [tbuck@savegeorgianbay.ca](mailto:tbuck@savegeorgianbay.ca)  
Save Georgian Bay, [savegeorgianbay.ca](http://savegeorgianbay.ca)

David Donnelly, 416.722.0220 or [david@donnellylaw.ca](mailto:david@donnellylaw.ca)  
Counsel to Save Georgian Bay