Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
55 York Street – Suite 600
Toronto, ON M5J 1R7

April 6, 2026

RE: Objections to the Ontario Pumped Storage Hydropower Project #89803

Dear Assessment Project Leader,

As a Councillor and resident of The Town of The Blue Mountains, Ontario, an adjacent community which relies on water from Georgian Bay. As a Town Councillor, I am legally bound to protect the drinking water of the residents I serve. I cannot accept the risk this project poses to our drinking water supply. Water sustains human life and is vital for human health (https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/water).

I have experienced that water travels to this area from Meaford quickly as within a day of the Johnny O fire dated May 25, 2023 where there was a significant volume of vehicle tires destroyed. The importance of this statement is that within one day rubber tire pieces appeared along the shoreline of town owned water access at the north end of Lansdowne Street North. The statement serves to reinforce environmental changes in one municipality have the potential to impact another**.**

My concerns are anchored in the knowledge that the Ontario Pump Storage Project will involve the excavation of contaminated land. The Meaford Tank Range (the 4th Canadian Division Training Centre) is currently classified by the Treasury Board of Canada as a contaminated site, largely due to more than 80 years of live-fire weapons training.

The extent of the contamination is complex because the site remains an active military facility raises several critical areas of concern:

Key Contaminants

- **Heavy Metals & Toxins:** Decades of expended rounds have deposited heavy metals into the soil.
- **Unexploded Ordnance (UXO):** The Department of National Defence (DND) has noted that it is "nearly impossible" to provide a full tally of the type and amount of ammunition remaining on the 19,000-acre base.
- **Chemical Residue:** Suspected toxic chemicals from various types of fires and military exercises are present in the impact areas.

The risk is a central focus of my comments.

- Water Quality: There is a specific risk that if contaminated soil is used to construct reservoir walls or is disturbed during tunneling, toxins could leach into the local water table or Georgian Bay. This is a primary concern for residents who rely on Georgian Bay for drinking water.
- Soil Disturbance: There are "serious environmental concerns" that large-scale excavation, blasting, and tunneling could disturb these legacy contaminants.

The Blue Mountains Town Council's recently passed resolution and submission requesting that the IAAC specifically include all federal records and archives regarding this contamination in their current study. It is important to ensure that "evidence-based" data on these toxins is made public before any further development is approved.

The following are critical factors that must be studied in detail with total independence and institutional integrity to eliminate inherent bias of any kind. The public's right to safety and truth outweighs the proponent's interest in moving the project forward. This is our forever drinking water and must remain safe.

1. Georgian Bay Water Quality

This is arguably the most contentious area of study due to the sheer volume of water being moved (approx. twenty-three billion litres daily).

- **Quality of Water** The Town of The Blue Mountains, Ontario, is recognized for having award-winning municipal drinking water, specifically honored for its exceptional taste and quality. The water, sourced from Georgian Bay (mentioned above close to the Military site by the Thornbury Water Treatment Plant (a city block so to speak from where I reside has won "Ontario's Best Tasting Water" (2019, 2024, 2025) and "Best of the Best" in North America (2019). The quality of our drinking water MUST NOT BE IMPACTED BY THIS PROJECT.
- **Quality of Water within the larger Great Lakes system -** The Great Lakes—Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario—form the world's largest surface freshwater system, containing approximately 20% of Earth's fresh surface water. Spanning 94,000+ square miles, this interconnected basin supports 40+ million people with drinking water, serves as a vital shipping corridor (Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway), and is a crucial economic engine for North America. Ultimately water from Georgian Bay flows into Lake Ontario, but not directly. As part of Lake Huron, its water moves into Lake Erie via the St. Clair River, Detroit River, and Lake St. Clair, before finally reaching Lake Ontario through the Niagara River. It is also connected to Lake Ontario by the artificial Trent-Severn Waterway. Therefore, a misstep could have a significant impact on what is the The Great Lakes—Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario—form the world's largest surface freshwater system, containing approximately 20% of Earth's fresh surface water. Spanning 94,000+ square miles, this interconnected basin supports 40+ million people with drinking water, serves as a vital shipping corridor (Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway), and is a crucial economic engine for North America.

2. Subsurface Contamination and PFAS

Because the project sits on the 4th Canadian Division Training Centre (4CDTC), the "baseline" environment is not pristine.

- **PFAS and Heavy Metals:** 2025-2026 reports have identified high levels of dissolved metals and "forever chemicals" (PFAS) in base groundwater. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIC) **must prove** that tunneling and reservoir construction will not "unlock" these toxins and send them into Georgian Bay or local private wells.

- **Unexploded Ordnance (UXO):** The proponent must provide a detailed plan for how they will with 100 percent certainty safely excavate millions of cubic metres of earth in an active military live-fire zone without triggering legacy explosives.

3. Geotechnical Integrity and Dam Safety

The project involves as I understand a 4.5-kilometre ring dam holding twenty-six million cubic metres of water on a limestone escarpment.

- **Karst Topography:** The EIS must evaluate the "leaky" nature of the Niagara Escarpment's limestone. If water seeps into the rock, it could cause internal erosion or instability.
- **Inundation Mapping:** As part of the EIS a "failure scenario" study is mandatory. It must show exactly where the water would go—and how much time residents in the "Meaford tank range" area and below the escarpment would have to evacuate—if the reservoir wall failed.

4. Impact on the Health and Safety of workers, residents, and tourists.

It is my understanding that the Impact Assessment Act requires major infrastructure projects to consider not just environmental effects, but also broader social, economic, and health implications Therefore, the EIS must undertake a risk assessment for a major workplace or construction accident occurring at the project site needs to be considered(Meaford Tank Range, the 4th Canadian Division Training Centre), as the impact on the local healthcare infrastructure and the surrounding population would be significant due to the site's unique environmental and geographic profile.

Below is the breakdown of the risks:

1. Impact on local Healthcare Infrastructure

The local health infrastructure could experience a code orange arising from a mass-casualty or high-toxicity event on a scale not experienced before.

- Capacity Constraints: Availability of specialized resources.
- Wait Times: A code orange with a significant influx of injuries from a construction or exposure event can immediately overwhelm any emergency department
- Specialized Treatment: In the event of chemical or heavy metal exposure, patients may need to be stabilized and then transferred to larger centers creating a critical lag in specialized care.

2. Environmental & Public Health Risks

- A "workplace accident" involving large-scale soil disturbance (such as during the proposed pumped storage construction) could release legacy contaminants:
- Contaminant Plumes: Disturbance of the "impact area" could release heavy metals (lead, selenium) and PAHs (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons) into the air as dust or into the groundwater.

- Water Supply Vulnerability: Most municipal systems are designed for "business as usual"—removing bacteria, silt, and common runoff. They are often not equipped to manage a sudden, high-concentration "slug" of industrial or military-grade contaminants from an accident.
- The "Unexploded" Factor: An accident involving unexploded ordnance (UXO) remains a primary safety concern for both workers and nearby residents, as I understand the DND has noted that decades of live-fire have left an unquantifiable amount of ammunition in the soil.

3. Demographic & Social Impact

- Proximity: Some residential homes are located only meters away from the base fence line, meaning a "workplace accident" involving a breach or toxic runoff could be an immediate "neighborhood accident."
- There has been reported consensus among regional advocacy groups and recent municipal resolutions is that the "buffer" between the industrial/military activity and the civilian population is too thin to manage a major failure without a catastrophic ripple effect on public health.
- The EIS must include an assessment of the local healthcare and public health capacity to ensure a safe supply of water in the event of a code orange and the size of which could be unprecedented.

In closing for the Town of the Blue Mountains, the disturbance of this site threatens drinking water safety for the residents, tourism, and agriculture.

Therefore, I cannot support the selection of the 4CDTC site for the Ontario Pumped Storage Hydropower Project. While energy storage is an important objective for Ontario, site selection must not be at the expense of public safety and the quality of their drinking water first and foremost.

Respectfully submitted by,

June Porter MN, MBA