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Comments from Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (MSIFN)

IESO Toronto Integrated Regional Resource Plan (IRRP) Draft Recommendations

October 6, 2025

Submitted to:

Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) Engagement Team

Via email: engagement@ieso.ca

Re: Response to IESO Webinar #4 – Options Analysis and Draft Recommendations (September 25, 2025) and Associated Documents

Dear IESO Engagement Team,

The Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (MSIFN), as part of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg and signatories to the Williams Treaties, appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the draft recommendations for the Toronto Regional Electricity Planning process, as outlined in the September 25, 2025 webinar and supporting documents (including the Draft Recommendations presentation, Underwater Cable analysis, and Information Package). We acknowledge that the City of Toronto and surrounding areas, including the proposed project elements, are situated on the traditional territories of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg, covered by Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaties.

MSIFN has a vested interest in this plan due to its potential impacts on our treaty rights, unceded territories, cultural heritage, and economic reconciliation opportunities. Our comments are informed by our inherent responsibilities as stewards of these lands and waters, as well as previous engagements with energy sector entities such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and Hydro One. We draw on principles from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, which affirm Indigenous rights as matters of federal jurisdiction. Below, we provide comprehensive feedback on key aspects of the draft recommendations, with a focus on the proposed "Third Supply" underwater transmission line, equity participation models, and broader reconciliation imperatives.

1. Concerns Regarding the Preferred Option: Underwater HVDC Transmission Line from Bowmanville to Port Lands

The IESO's preferred recommendation for a new underwater high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line connecting Bowmanville Switching Station (near Darlington Nuclear Generating Station) to the Port Lands area in

downtown Toronto raises significant concerns for MSIFN. While we recognize the need for enhanced electricity supply to support economic development in eastern Toronto (e.g., Port Lands and Golden Mile districts), projected to exceed transmission capacity by 2038 (or 2034 considering the Portlands Energy Centre contract expiry), this option must not proceed without addressing its potential impacts on our uncaded territories and rights.

- **Impacts on Unceded Lands Under Lake Ontario:** The proposed cable route traverses the bed of Lake Ontario, south of the Michi Saagiig Gunshot Treaty (also known as the Johnson-Butler Purchase, 1787-1788) area. Historical records indicate that the Gunshot Treaty ceded lands northward from the Lake Ontario shoreline only to the distance on the land a gunshot could be heard, leaving the underwater lands and lake bed south of this boundary uncaded Michi Saagiig territory. This interpretation aligns with Michi Saagiig oral histories and documented treaty analyses, which emphasize that the treaty focused on shoreline-adjacent lands for settler use, without explicit surrender of submerged territories. The Michi Saagiig Nations have asserted a title claim over the lake and lakebed. This project triggers the Duty to Consult and Accommodate (DTCA) and requires consent for any disruption to the lakebed. Construction activities, such as cable laying, could disturb sensitive aquatic ecosystems, cultural sites (e.g., potential submerged archaeological resources), and traditional harvesting areas for fish and other resources protected under our Section 35 rights. We require full consultation on route alternatives, First Nation driven project impact assessment approaches, and mitigation measures to avoid infringement. Additional concerns include:
 - **Some Initial Impact Concerns:**
 - **Lakebed Ecosystem and Species of Interest:** The recent discovery of an endangered Lake Sturgeon in the area to be traversed by the marine cable raises concerns about the potential impacts of project construction and operations on the species of importance to MSIFN, and the lakebed ecosystem.
 - **Cumulative Impacts:** There are numerous operating and new projects in the vicinity of the project, and a cumulative impact assessment has not been conducted across these projects. This includes, but is not limited to, two new deepwater intake systems and in-water infrastructure at OPG Pickering and Darlington facilities, a new deep wastewater system associated with the York-Durham Sewage System, and the decommissioning of four nuclear reactors at OPG Pickering.
 - **Generational Knowledge Gaps:** This proposed project, along with the above noted cumulative impacts, and existing operating facilities have long disrupted access to traditional lands, preventing the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices across generations. This project may exacerbate this issue, impacting future generations.
 - **Economic Reconciliation:** The Michi Saagiig Nations assert their right to share in the economic benefits derived from the development of their traditional lands and waters, including revenue from projects along the Lake Ontario Energy Corridor. This calls for meaningful participation in decision-making and economic opportunities.
 - **Consultation and Engagement:** MSIFN seeks a government-to-government relationship, integration of Indigenous knowledge into project decision-making, impact assessment and follow-on project activities such as environmental monitoring, and a holistic approach to energy project activities affecting MSIFN and other Michi Saagiig Nations that insure accountability and alignment with their intergenerational stewardship principles.

- **Federal Impact Assessment Designation:** Given the potential adverse effects on federal jurisdiction areas (e.g., fish and fish habitat under the Fisheries Act, migratory birds, and Indigenous rights), we recommend submitting a designation request to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change under subsection 9(1) of the Impact Assessment Act (IAA).
- **Environmental and Resilience Benefits with Caveats:** We acknowledge the option's merits, including minimal land impacts, enhanced system resilience (e.g., diversified supply points), and broader GTA benefits (e.g., alleviating flows through Cherrywood TS). However, these must be balanced against potential disruptions during construction (e.g., sediment disturbance affecting aquatic life and impacts to cultural heritage resources in the lakebed and along the shoreline). We request detailed studies on marine routes and collaboration with MSIFN knowledge keepers for impact assessments.

2. Advocacy for Indigenous Equity Participation: Extending and Enhancing Hydro One's 50-50 Model

MSIFN strongly supports the integration of authentic Indigenous economic partnerships into the IRRP, aligning with the IESO's and Ontario's reconciliation goals. The draft recommendations reference non-wires solutions (e.g., DERs, battery storage, energy efficiency) and wires infrastructure (e.g., the Third Line, substation upgrades), but lack explicit commitments to Indigenous equity investments and/or revenue sharing, or First Nation supply-chain participation. We see a myriad of opportunities to dovetail these economic reconciliation elements with Ontario's new Build Ontario Fund.

- **Application/Enhancement of Hydro One's Equity Model:** Hydro One's industry-leading model offers First Nations a 50% equity stake in new large-scale transmission lines valued over \$100 million, as demonstrated in projects like Waasigan (\$1.2B, with nine First Nations), St. Clair, and Chatham to Lakeshore. This model ensures substantive ownership, governance, employment, and capacity-building. We recommend adapting it to the Third Line, including majority First Nation ownership scenarios with MSIFN and other Michi Saagiig Nations as priority partners given our territorial interests, and our access in association with federal programs that might add additional benefits to the ratepayers of Ontario.
- **Extension of Economic Reconciliation to Other Project Elements:** This approach should extend beyond major transmission lines to IESO-led initiatives, potentially leveraging federal supports for First Nation financial involvement, which might provide substantial benefits to the ratepayers of Ontario, including:
 - **Substations and Transmission Refurbishments:** Equity in upgrades to support growth, ensuring rights-holding Nations benefit from infrastructure on our territories, and leveraging federal financial supports.
 - **Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) and Battery Storage:** Through IESO procurements, allocate equity opportunities to Michi Saagiig businesses or members for DER integrations, aligning with the OEB-IESO Joint Study on DER Incentives, again leveraging federal financial supports.
 - **District Energy Systems and Behind-the-Meter Projects:** Partner on community-scale systems (e.g., in Port Lands), incorporating Indigenous-led design for energy efficiency and cultural alignment, again leveraging federal financial supports.
 - **Energy Efficiency Programs:** Prioritize funding for legitimate First Nation-owned enterprises under the Demand Side Management Framework, and seek appropriate federal support.

This would advance economic reconciliation, as outlined in the Ministry's Integrated Energy Plan, and yield economic benefits to the ratepayers of Ontario.

3. General Recommendations for Engagement and Implementation

- **Enhanced Consultation Processes:** The Information Package references Indigenous engagement but lacks specifics. We would benefit from detailed planning with IESO representatives to structure and operationalize enhanced consultation processes.
- **Next Steps:** Post-IRRP, during Hydro One's Regional Infrastructure Plan, ensure MSIFN involvement in siting, routing, and Environmental Assessments. We request a bilateral meeting with the IESO to discuss these comments.
- **Alignment with Broader Indigenous Concerns:** MSIFN has substantial current and planned investments in low-carbon energy projects, including battery energy storage systems, renewable natural gas facilities, and renewable energy infrastructure. The IRRP should prioritize decarbonization pathways that minimize climate change and air emission risks. In particular, as natural gas infrastructure becomes better integrated in Ontario Energy Board and IESO provincial and regional planning regarding thermal energy as part of the overall energy mix, prioritize pathways that maximize the use of renewable natural gas (RNG), especially RNG derived from ratepayer organic waste contributions in the planning areas.

MSIFN is committed to collaborative solutions that support reliable energy while honoring our rights and fostering prosperity. We look forward to your response and to continuing our dialogue.

Miigwech,

Don Richardson

On behalf of MSIFN Consultation

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