

# North Shore Link

**Draft Environmental Study Report highlights**
May 2026

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Connecting power and possibility™



# Land acknowledgement

Hydro One acknowledges that the North Shore Link project is situated upon the traditional territory of Indigenous Nations. We recognize that these Nations have been stewards of this land since time immemorial and that their sovereignty over these territories was never ceded. We also acknowledge that this land is part of the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory. We are thankful to be welcomed on these lands as partners in our shared future among the diverse Indigenous people who call these lands home today.

**Cover and land acknowledgement illustrations courtesy of Storm Angeconeb.**



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# Introduction

Hydro One is pleased to share this summary of the key findings and next steps presented in the draft Environmental Study Report (ESR) for the North Shore Link project. The draft ESR details the potential environmental effects and planned mitigation measures of this project and is the culminating report of Ontario's *Class Environmental Assessment for Transmission Facilities* process. It was informed by technical experts and through consultation with Indigenous communities, local and regional community members, and elected officials.

The draft ESR is available for a 30-day public comment period from **Monday, May 11 to Friday, June 12, 2026.** Comments received during this period and Hydro One's responses will be documented in the final ESR. Details on how to share your feedback can be found at the end of this highlights document.

## Have your say

We welcome comments on the draft ESR during the 30-day review period. View the full draft report and provide your input today. **HydroOne.com/NSL**



# Investing in northeast Ontario

Long-term electricity demand in northeast Ontario is increasing. The North Shore Link project will reinforce the transmission system in northeast Ontario and, once built, strengthen reliability and support economic growth. The proposed North Shore Link is expected to deliver lasting benefits to Indigenous and local communities and industries in the region.

### Economic growth

The transmission line is expected to support economic growth and community expansion by enabling new investment and regional infrastructure.

### Reliable and resilient supply

Once built, this project will improve reliability for homes, businesses and industry in northeast Ontario.

### Strengthening the grid

The line will help strengthen and improve efficiency across the province's electricity grid and supply power where it is needed.

### First Nation partnerships

Partnerships with First Nations will allow us to better understand traditional knowledge, areas of significance and cultural values and incorporate those values into project planning, impact assessment and mitigation.

## Fast facts

**105 kilometres**
The approximate length of the proposed route.

**End-to-end**
The line will extend from Wharncliffe to Sault Ste. Marie.

**230 kilovolt**
The new transmission line will support growing electricity demand in the region.



# About the North Shore Link project

The North Shore Link project is a proposed new transmission line that, once built, will support growing electricity needs in northern Ontario and strengthen the connection between the northeast and northwest to improve overall resiliency. The double-circuit, 230-kV line will be approximately 105 km long and extend from Mississagi Transformer Station (TS) near Wharncliffe in Algoma to Third Line TS in Sault Ste. Marie.

Connecting the line will require upgrades and expansions at both transformer stations, as well as at Algoma TS, located east of Algoma Mills in the Township of the North Shore. This is needed to accommodate additional station equipment that will support the overall operation of the transmission system.

## Planned timeline

Anticipated completion of EA:
**Fall 2026**

Construction begins:
**2027**

Planned line in-service:
**2029**

# Selecting the preferred route

Through collaboration with Indigenous communities and the public, we identified and evaluated route segments to connect the Mississagi TS and Third Line TS. We evaluated route segments using four criteria:

**Indigenous community values**

**Socio-economic environment**

**Natural environment**

**Technical and cost considerations**

We combined the top-scoring segments to develop three possible routes: the northern route, the central route and the southern route. Based on overall scoring and feedback from First Nation and Indigenous communities and the public, the northern route emerged as the preferred route.

## Specifically, it:

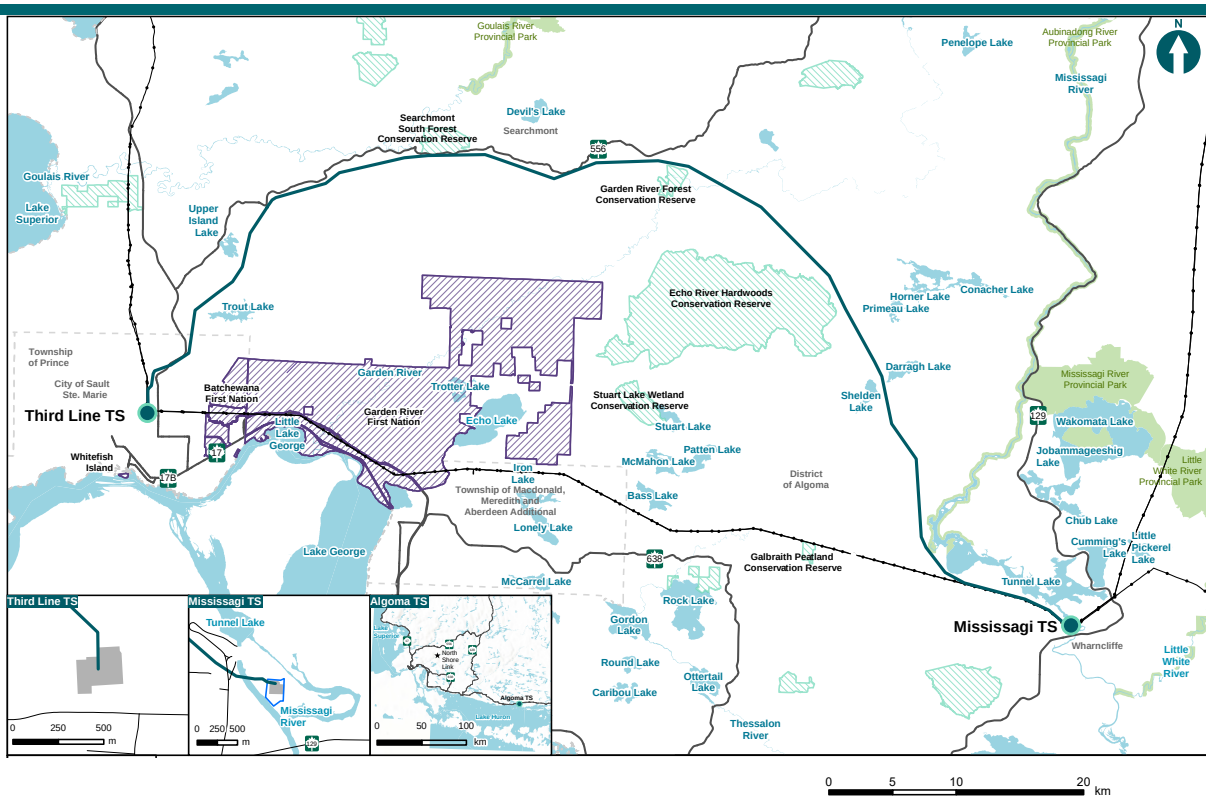
- Provides opportunities for improved access during construction, operation and maintenance.
- Minimizes the need to parallel or cross pipelines.
- Avoids known areas of Indigenous cultural significance.
- Avoids reserve lands.
- Avoids Hiawatha Highlands and conservation areas including:
  - Garden River Forest Conservation Reserve
  - Echo River Hardwoods Conservation Reserve
  - Stuart Lake Wetland Conservation Reserve

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## North Shore Link preferred route

**Map Legend**

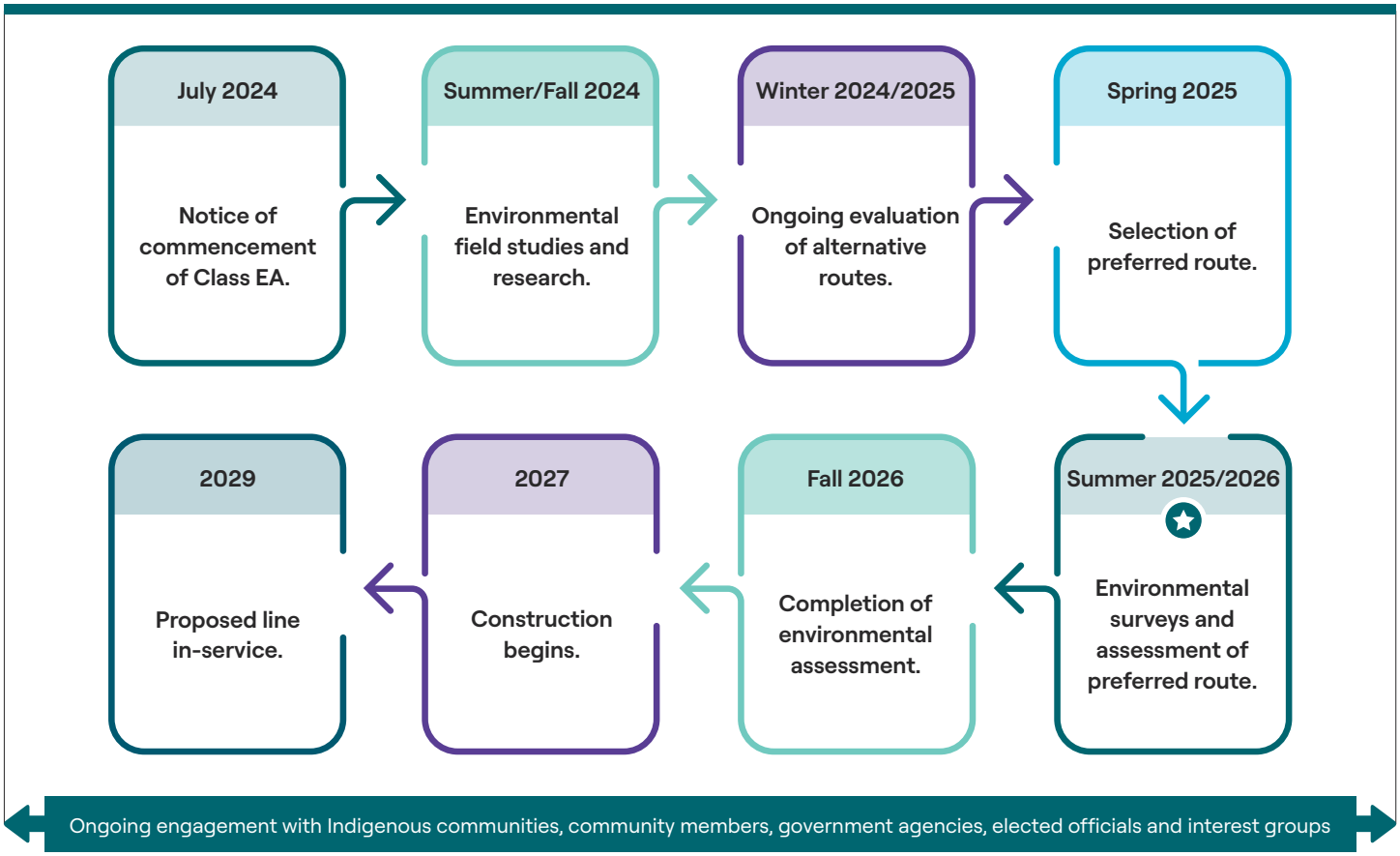
- Transformer station (TS)
- Preferred route
- Existing transmission line
- Highway
- First nation reserve
- Conservation reserve
- Provincial park
- Municipal boundary
- Station expansion area



# About the Class Environmental Assessment

A Class EA is required under the Environmental Assessment Act for critical infrastructure projects. It identifies the potential impacts of the project through field studies and engagement with Indigenous communities, experts, local organizations and environmental partners.

## HOW THE PROCESS WORKS




### The draft ESR describes:

- The existing conditions in the area surrounding the project.
- The engagements we have undertaken with Indigenous communities, the public, local communities and government.
- The process to evaluate route options and select the preferred one.
- The potential effects identified and assessed.
- The actions we will take to avoid and minimize potential negative project effects.



# Working in partnership with Indigenous communities

Hydro One will continue to meet Ontario's long-term electricity demands in partnership with First Nations as we develop the North Shore Link project. Hydro One closely collaborates with nine First Nation partners, including Garden River First Nation, as well as the eight communities represented by the Waasmoowin Opportunities and Consultation Council: Batchewana First Nation, Thessalon First Nation, Mississauga First Nation, Serpent River First Nation, Sagamok Anishnawbek, Whitefish River First Nation, Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapitae First Nation.

We understand there will be impacts to Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and we will work with communities to mitigate impacts where possible. Our continued work with the nine First Nation communities will allow us to better understand traditional knowledge, areas of cultural significance and cultural values.

Partnership with Indigenous communities includes feedback and direct engagement through in-person Indigenous community open house sessions. These sessions are especially important for building trust, sharing clear information, and providing community members with an opportunity to ask questions and be heard.

The project also follows Hydro One's industry-leading First Nation Equity Partnership Model and will offer proximate First Nations 50 per cent of equity on the transmission line component of the line.

## What we've heard

- Respect Indigenous land use and cultural values.
- Maintain clear communication and ongoing engagement.
- Minimize overlap with known archaeological resources.
- Safeguard water resources and the natural environment.
- Protect species at risk and sensitive areas.

# Ongoing engagement

The project commenced in 2024 and Hydro One continues to engage with local communities. This includes hosting several community open houses, mailing thousands of project notices, ongoing calls, emails and meetings with those interested in the project.

We will continue to work with Indigenous communities in the spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility. We have formed an environmental committee, made up of Indigenous community members and Hydro One employees, to share and discuss updates to the project throughout the planning and development process.

Through the First Nation Equity Partnership Model, Hydro One takes a community-led, collaborative approach to building transmission infrastructure with First Nation partners. This includes full collaboration on planning, design and environmental processes, including engagement through the environmental committee.

In addition to working closely with First Nation partners, we have collaborated and consulted with the Michipicoten First Nation, and the Huron-Superior Regional Métis (Métis Nation of Ontario [MNO] Region 4), Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis (MNO Region 5), Killarney Métis (currently represented through MNO Region 5) and Bar River Métis communities.




## Key actions Hydro One will continue to take

- **Work with property owners to understand unique features:** We will continue to engage directly with landowners to identify and learn about the unique characteristics of their properties, including cultural features.
- **Enhance community benefits through collaboration:** We will continue to explore partnerships and community-led initiatives with Indigenous communities, municipalities and interest groups to identify opportunities for local economic development, employment and cultural recognition that align with project goals.
- **Conduct ongoing monitoring:** We will conduct monitoring throughout construction to confirm mitigation measures are functioning as expected.
- **Implement a biodiversity initiative:** We will invest in local projects or activities aimed at habitat enhancement or restoration.
- **Maintain transparency and accountability:** We will provide updates to communities and partners through public reporting, meetings and digital platforms and will gather and document feedback.



# Highlights: Indigenous community values

## What we found

The project study area lies within the traditional territories of Indigenous Nations. Protecting cultural values, the land and wildlife remains a key priority.

Hydro One works closely with Indigenous communities to incorporate traditional knowledge, land use values and areas of cultural importance into project planning, with the goal of avoiding and protecting sensitive sites wherever possible.

Community members have participated in environmental field studies as field monitors, providing both meaningful involvement and training opportunities. Field work has also been planned with respect for seasonal ceremonies and cultural practices.

Following the studies, draft field summary reports were shared with Indigenous communities for review and input, ensuring their knowledge is considered in project decisions.

## What we'll do

- Work with communities to identify and avoid areas of traditional use, including harvesting and sacred sites.
- Include Indigenous communities in archaeological investigations and environmental field surveys as field monitors.
- Respect community confidentiality and mapping of traditional land use areas.

### Key takeaway

**We respect Indigenous rights, culture and land use. Ongoing engagement will ensure that traditional knowledge and values are meaningfully integrated into project planning, effects assessment and mitigation.**



# Highlights: Socio-economic environment

## Forestry resources

### What we found

About one-third of the project study area is used for forestry operations and activities to support it. The construction of the project may reduce or limit access temporarily to certain portions of existing areas for identified landowners, leaseholders and license holders.

### What we'll do

- Work with rights-holders and/or external partners to avoid conflict with harvest areas and forestry roads.
- Limit tree removal to what is necessary for construction, maintenance and operation.
- Restore cleared areas using revegetation methods such as planting and natural regrowth where possible.
- Ensure all construction on government-managed forest lands complies with the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* and applicable forestry management plans.

### Key takeaways

**Hydro One and our contractor will work with Indigenous communities, municipalities, provincial agencies, landowners and infrastructure operators to ensure the project respects existing land use plans, protects cultural values and minimizes disturbances. Where possible, the project will use existing corridors and access routes to limit new land disturbances. The project will follow all required permitting and safety protocols.**



## Trapping

### What we found

The project study area overlaps with 13 registered traplines. Construction activities have the potential to disrupt wildlife habitats, displace animals and alter migration routes, which could reduce the availability of species traditionally harvested through trapping. During construction, trappers may face temporary restrictions in accessing their lines.

### What we'll do

- Engage with Indigenous communities, government, trapline holders, land users and local organizations about preferred hunting areas and traplines and plans to avoid them, where feasible.
- Incorporate location and seasonal information into the construction schedule to avoid and minimize potential effects to traplines as much as possible.

### Key takeaways

**With the appropriate mitigation measures in place, we expect to limit impacts to trapping activity in the project study area. No significant effects are projected.**

## Mineral resources

### What we found

Once built, the new transmission line will support economic development and industry in northeast Ontario. Currently, there are no active mines within the project study area. Any limit or reduction in access to certain portions of existing areas for identified landowners, leaseholders, license holders and claims holders as a result of construction activities is expected to be temporary.

### What we'll do

- Engage with mining claims holders and inactive mine owners and operators prior to construction.
- If unexpected mine features are found, we will stop work, secure the area and notify the mining claims holder and the Ministry of Energy and Mines.



## Recreational resources

### What we found

Outdoor recreation and adventure are key benefits to life in northeast Ontario. The project area includes the Mississagi River Provincial Park, the Searchmont South Forest Conservation Reserve and a wide variety of trails, lakes and rivers. The area is ideal for hiking, canoeing, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing and camping, and there are facilities for golf and shooting. Based on community feedback and additional field studies, we avoided impacts to Hiawatha Highlands and Wishart Park. During construction, these areas may be closed temporarily to trail users to maintain public safety. Nearby open areas may experience noise from construction activities.

### What we'll do

- Engage with trail authorities and recreational groups to identify ways to mitigate site-specific environmental impacts.
- Provide advance notice of trail closures and coordinate timing to reduce disruption, especially during peak seasons.
- Provide property/business owners with advance notice of activities occurring near their property/business.
- Implement public safety measures, including signage, barriers, lighting and trail surface reinforcement where necessary.
- Engage with Indigenous communities to identify hunting areas and seasonal schedules so that, where feasible, construction timelines can be coordinated to avoid peak harvest season.

### Key takeaways

**We anticipate no direct or long-term impacts to snowmobile trails, hiking trails or recreational paths. Hydro One and our contractor will provide advance notice to recreational clubs and organizations to make them aware of any restrictions and the work schedule. We will prioritize public safety and clear communication throughout the project.**



# Highlights: Natural environment

## Water quality

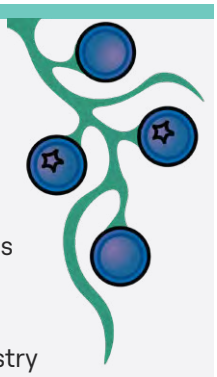
### What we found

The project study area contains dozens of rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. Regional water quality is sensitive in some areas. Construction and certain maintenance activities may temporarily impact the quantity or quality of surface water. Vulnerable aquifers and groundwater recharge zones that overlap with the preferred route, and which may be sensitive to changes from land use and excavation, will also be monitored as required.

### What we'll do

- Maintain an Emergency Response Plan to react quickly and effectively in the event of spills or contamination, in collaboration with local experts and officials.
- Engage with conservation authorities and Indigenous communities on water protection strategies.
- Avoid sensitive water features and use existing crossings where possible.
- Use erosion sediment control measures to keep soil in place, prevent sedimentation and avoid contamination.
- Minimize vegetation removal and restore areas post-construction.
- Coordinate with relevant authorities and nearby well owners to address site-specific concerns, where required.
- Minimize underground disturbance and plan work carefully near these features.

### Protecting Mississagi River Provincial Park



As it bends north around Tunnel Lake, the preferred route overlaps slightly with Mississagi River Provincial Park. We will obtain all necessary permits from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for all work done within the park. We will also restore any areas that might be disturbed by construction activities.



## Wildlife and habitat features

### What we found

Areas surrounding the preferred route include diverse forests, wildlife, wetlands and aquatic habitats. The area is home to several species at risk, including the Eastern Whip-poor-will, silver-haired bat and Midland painted turtle.

### What we'll do

- Flag and protect wildlife habitats, including nesting and denning sites.
- Maintain animal movement corridors to support habitat connectivity.
- Safeguard sensitive habitat with protective barriers and erosion control measures.
- Limit vegetation removal and retain compatible species where possible.
- Restore disturbed areas with native vegetation and habitat features.
- Prevent invasive species spread through equipment cleaning, proper handling and disposal of plant material, and use native species in restoration.

### Key takeaways

**Impacts on forests, water resources, wildlife habitat and species at risk are expected to be temporary and localized. We will continue to collaborate with Indigenous communities to safeguard the long-term health of these lands, waters and species who inhabit them.**



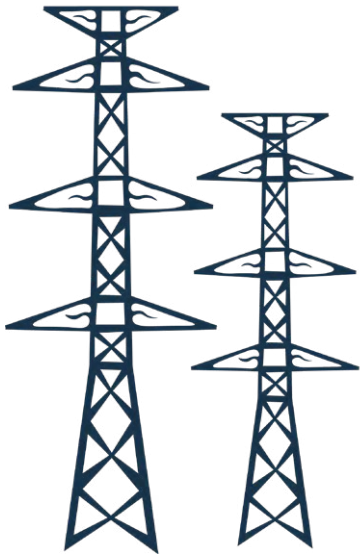

# Highlights: Technical and cost

## What we found

The proposed route for the North Shore Link provides easier access for construction activities, as well as operational and maintenance needs. It limits the need to parallel or cross known pipelines, reducing the chances of damage during construction and induction (potentially causing corrosion). The route also requires the fewest angle structures, which are transmission towers used where the line changes direction. This lowers the overall costs and supports completion within the planned schedule.

## What we'll do

- Continue to consider effects of the transmission line on residences and businesses.
- Make informed decisions about the type, location, height and clearance of individual transmission towers.



### Key takeaway

**The northern route offers competitive advantages and is the ideal option for access and constructability.**

# Share your feedback

Hydro One encourages and welcomes feedback from Indigenous communities, residents, interested parties and the public.



## We want to know

- Do you have additional suggestions for avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts that you would like us to consider?
- Do you have questions about the overall assessment or specific parts of the assessment?
- Do you have any other comments about the draft ESR that you would like us to consider?

## How to provide comments

The draft ESR is available for a 30-day period from **Monday, May 11 to Friday, June 12, 2026.** The draft ESR will be available electronically on Hydro One's dedicated project website: **HydroOne.com/NSL**

Written comments regarding the draft ESR must be submitted to Hydro One no later than **4:30 p.m. EDT on Friday, June 12, 2026.** They must be addressed to:

**Andrew Roberts**
**Manager, Environmental Services**
483 Bay St., 14th Floor
Toronto, ON
M5G 2P5

Comments can also be submitted to **1-877-345-6799** or via email: **Community.Relations@HydroOne.com**

In the event of disruption to mail delivery, please also provide comments by phone or email.

For the most up-to-date project information and project updates, visit our project website: **HydroOne.com/NSL**

## Where to find the draft ESR

### Online

**HydroOne.com/NSL**

### In person

Hard copies are available at:

**James L. McIntyre Centennial Library**
50 East St.
Sault Ste. Marie, ON
705-759-5230

**Searchmont Community Centre**
734 Highway 532
Searchmont, ON
705-781-3160

**Thessalon Public Library**
187 Main St.
Thessalon, ON
705-842-2306

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**We welcome your feedback.**
View the full draft ESR and provide your input today. **HydroOne.com/NSL**

If you have any questions or need further information about this project, contact **Community.Relations@HydroOne.com** or **1-877-345-6799**