



Oneida Nation of the Thames Connection to the Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System



Marcy McKillop

November 12, 2025



Source: Oneida Nation of the Thames

Background



Chief Todd Cornelius and Brandon Doxtator at Word Water Day on March 22, 2023

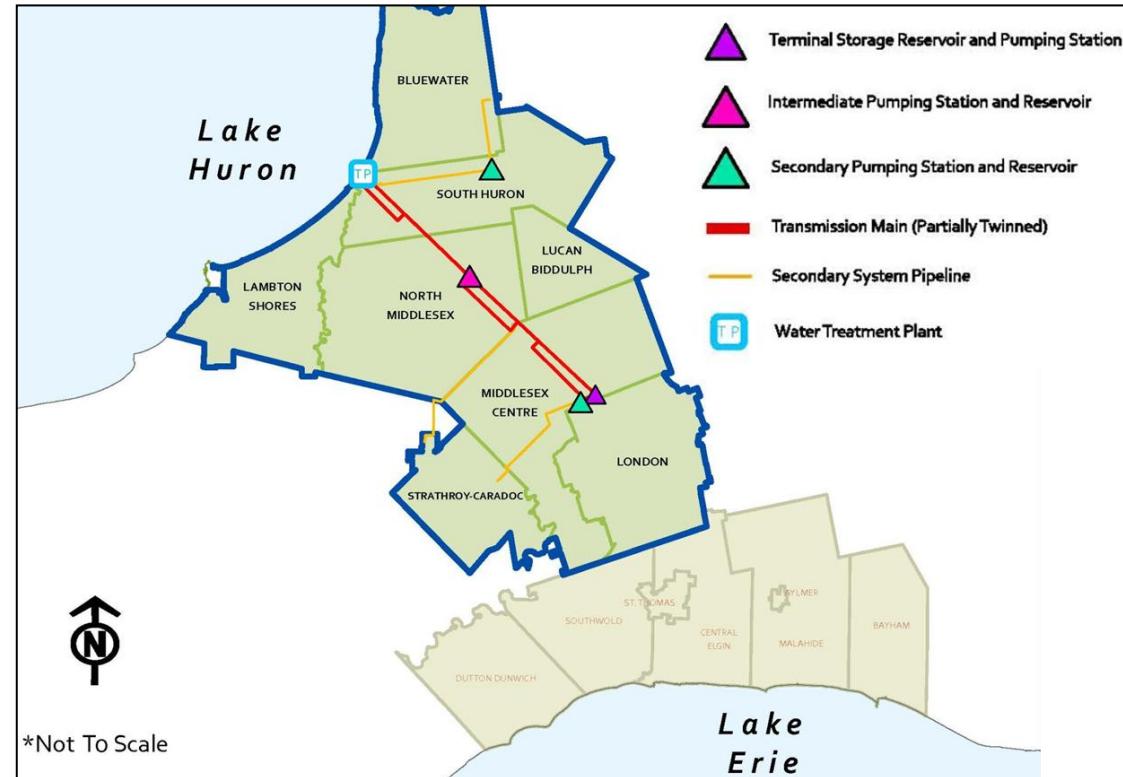
(Source: Oneida Nation of the Thames)

- Water insecurity is an issue for many First Nations across Canada
- Ending long-term drinking water advisories is a federal priority



Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System

Regional water supply system (utility) supplying water to approximately 500,000 people



Primary Water Supply System



Community Water Supply System





Timeline

- 2021 feasibility study recommended connection to the Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System
- Preliminary design undertaken in 2022
- Funding announcement – March of 2023
 - Negotiation of a water supply agreement
 - Detailed design initiated
- \$43 M federal funding involving two separate and distinct projects:
 - On-settlement – distribution system improvements within Oneida Nation of the Thames
 - Off-settlement – transmission connection to Oneida Nation of the Thames

Oneida Nation of the Thames signs \$43M clean water deal with federal government

By [Brent Lale](#)

Published: March 23, 2023 at 9:31AM EDT

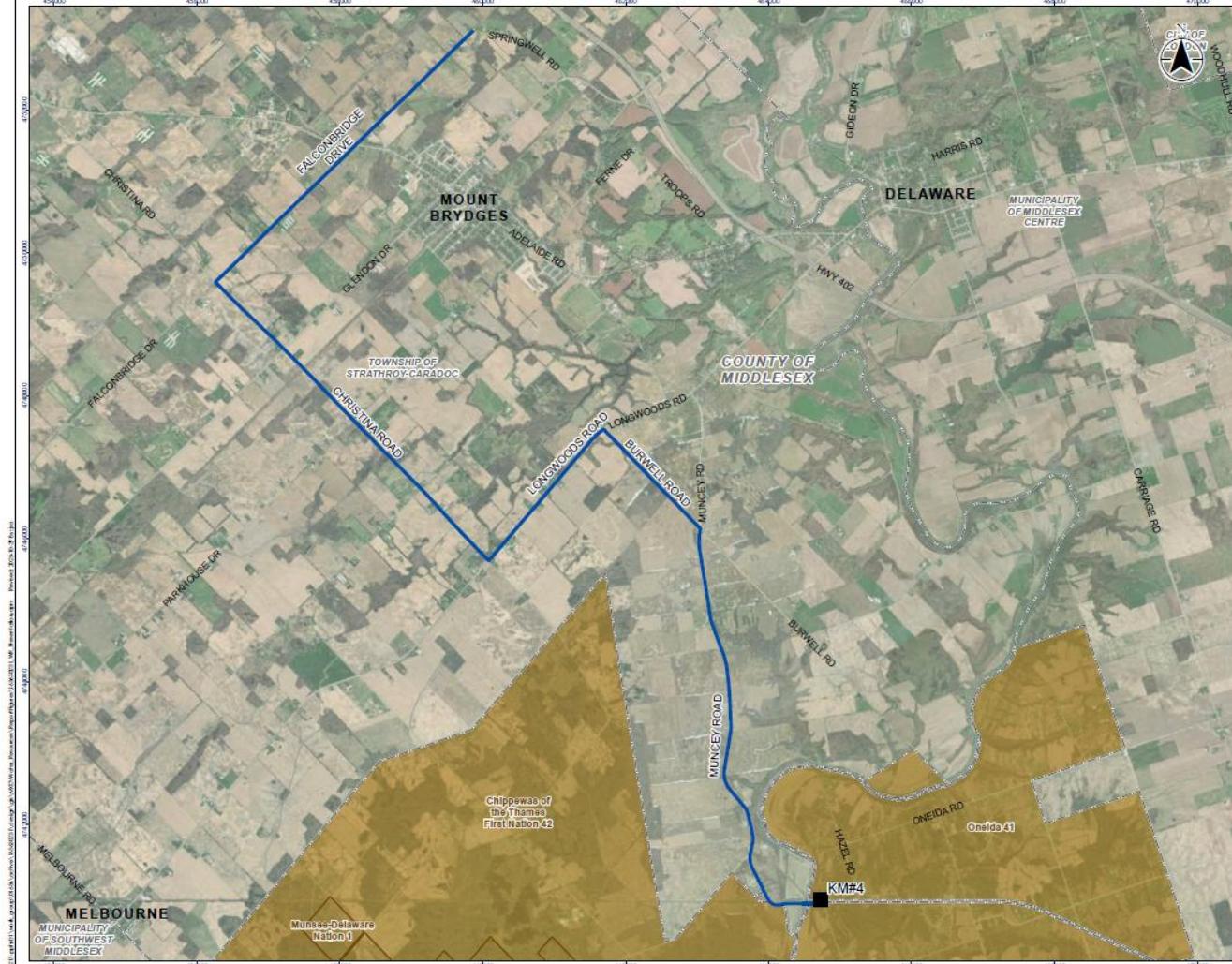


Oneida member Kaila Schuyler honouring water during World Water Day celebrations on March 22, 2023. (Source: Oneida Nation of the Thames)



Off-Settlement Project

- Extension of secondary system
- New utility transmission infrastructure within municipal and County right-of-way
- Extensive consultation required with on-settlement team, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Indigenous Services Canada
- 21 km transmission main
 - 400 mm diameter
 - 21 air release valves
 - 25 drain chambers
 - flow metering and control valves at point of connection





Highlights

- No changes to Komoka-Mount Brydges Pumping Station
- Transmission route extends across three conservation authority watersheds
- 30 m elevation drop
- Several horizontal directional drill crossings:
 - CN Railway
 - various County Roads
 - various municipal drains
 - Thames River
 - selected portions of the route to avoid tree removals and/or dewatering
- 100% externally funded





Change is Constant

- Tariffs and uncertainty regarding changes to procurement policies
- Media attention
- Changing regulatory environment
 - July 1, 2025 changes - O. Reg. 63/16 Registrations Under Part II.s of the Environmental Protection Act
 - removal of restrictions on volumes for construction dewatering

State of emergency declared amid water shortage in Oneida Nation of the Thames

It's costing \$20K per day to ship water into the community, officials say



Andrew Lupton · CBC News · Posted: Dec 20, 2022 11:11 AM EST | Last Updated: December 20, 2022



After 5 years, Oneida still has no clean water. Why a class action settlement could be a 'relief'

The federal drinking water settlement deal covers 142,000 individuals from 258 First Nations

CBC News · Posted: Mar 10, 2024 7:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: March 10, 2024

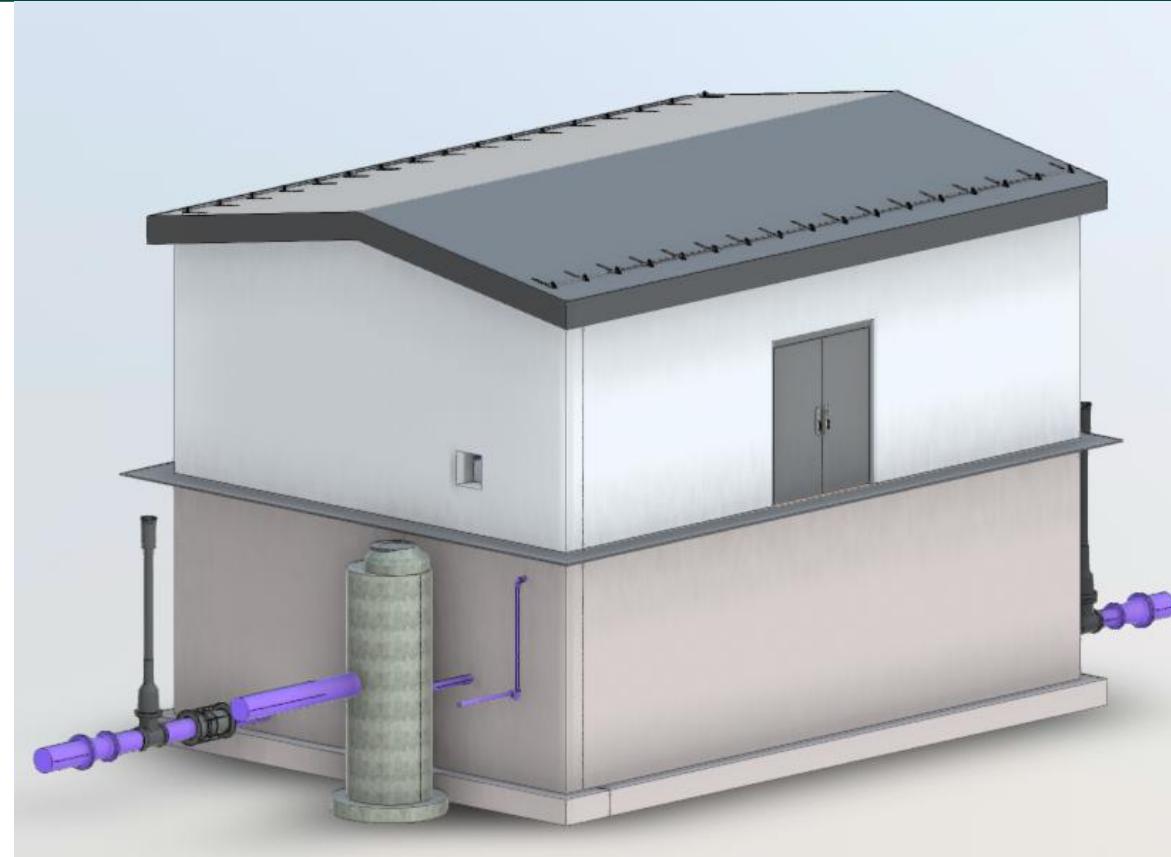


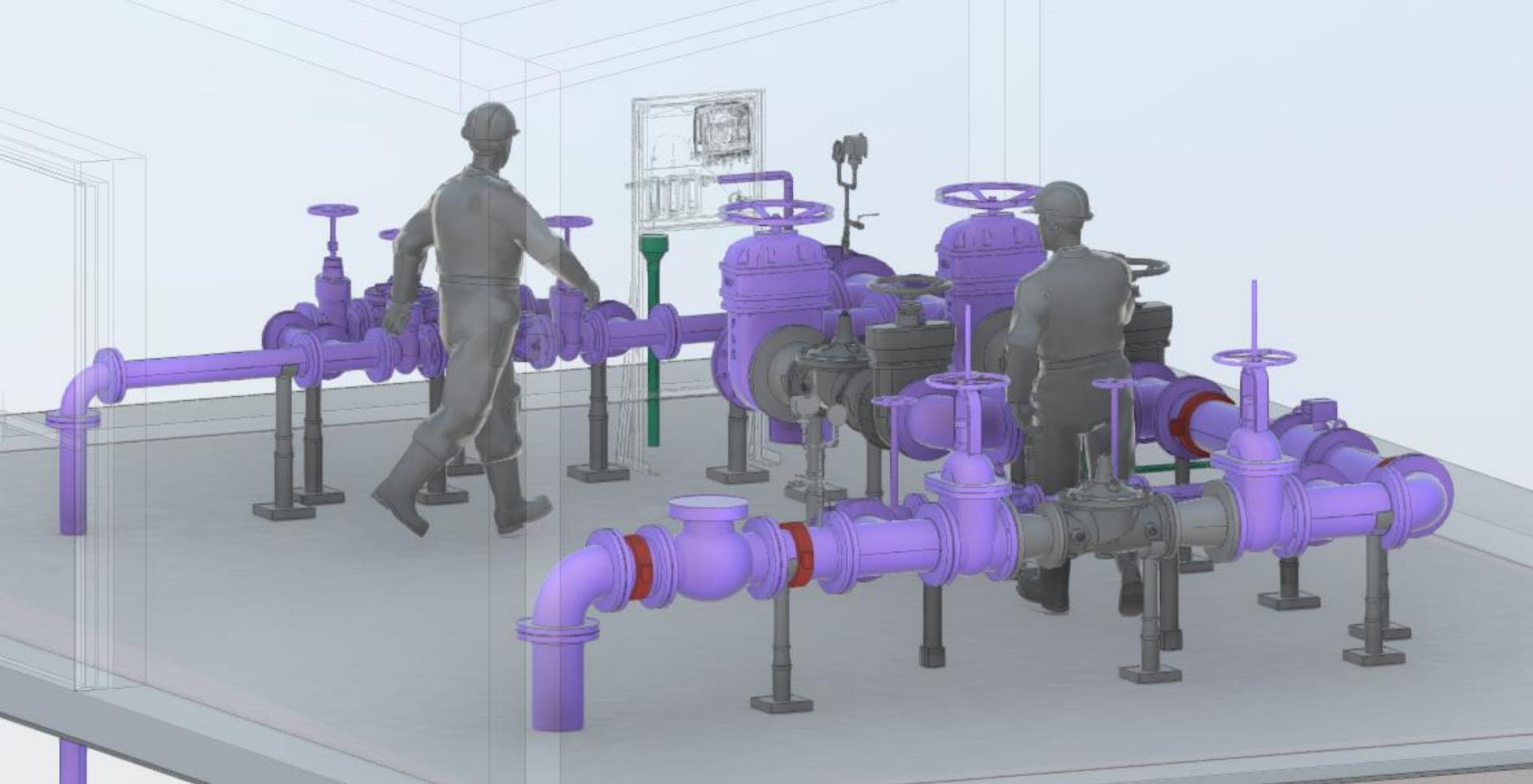


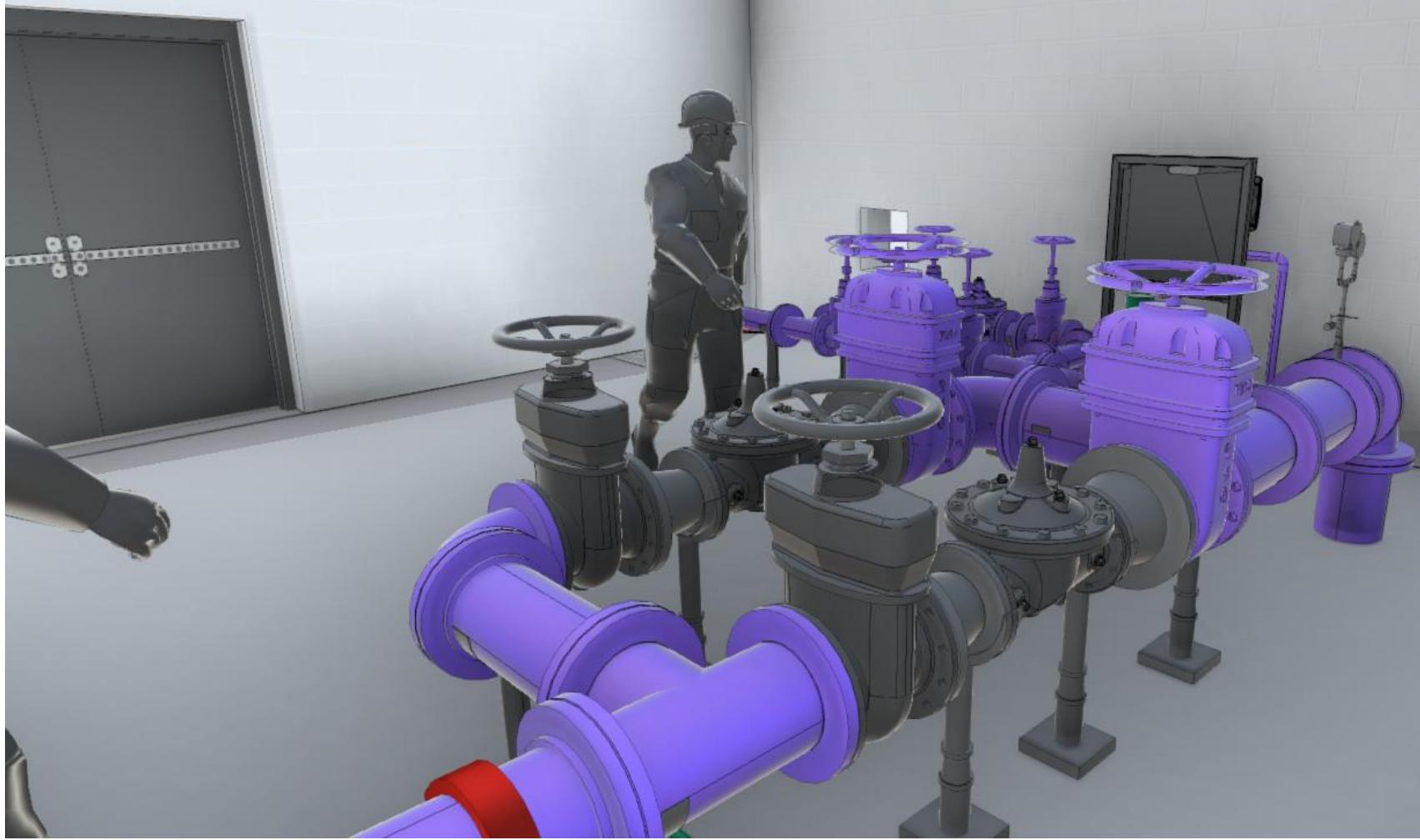
Point of Connection

Piping, control valves and flow meter ultimately configured above grade in a pre-engineered building eliminating any confined space

Safety by Design









Strategies

- Thorough and collaborative design review
- Two-stage procurement
 - Pre-qualification of General Contractor
 - Evaluation criteria: corporate profile, experience (including references), qualifications, health and safety, scheduling and commissioning
 - Pre-qualification of trenchless/drilling sub-contractor to undertake the Thames River crossing
 - Evaluation criteria: corporate profile, experience (including references), qualifications, health and safety, and scheduling



Strategies cont'd

- Consider applicable insurance requirements:
 - Contractor required to provide proof of:
 - Comprehensive general liability – additional insured
 - Automotive Insurance
 - Project-specific insurance:
 - Builder's Risk (All Risk) – policy limits set based on value of the building
 - Wrap-Up Liability (Project Specific Liability)
 - Environmental Impairment (Pollution) Liability Coverage



Lessons Learned

- Importance of a common design basis for the on-settlement and off-settlement projects
- Transmission system versus distribution system – ensure the differences are acknowledged
- Class cost estimates – level of accuracy must be clear as the project evolves
- Contractual considerations:
 - cancellation clauses
 - insurance



Current Status

- Project is being tendered in November 2025, as one contract, to the seven pre-qualified General Contractors
- Contract award is anticipated for early 2026





Acknowledgements

- Oneida Nation of the Thames
- Stantec Consulting Limited
- Ontario Clean Water Agency





Questions

