

Georgina Island Fixed Link Project – Summary of Issues

This document provides a high-level summary of the issues submitted to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) on the Georgina Island Fixed Link Project (the Project) during the comment period on the Initial Project Description submitted by the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation (the Proponent). The issues highlight the information needed to support the Agency’s decision on whether an impact assessment is required under section 16 of the *Impact Assessment Act* and— if an assessment is required — to inform the planning phase documents and further assessment. Original submissions are posted on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (Reference Number #83539). Categories of issues are listed in alphabetical order.

The Detailed Project Description must contain the information from the Initial Project Description in addition to the necessary information provided in response to the Summary of Issues. This necessary information should be included in the main body of the Detailed Project Description, and not just in appendices to facilitate understanding by participants, including the public and Indigenous groups.

Accidents and Malfunctions
Need for further details on proposed accident and malfunction avoidance and response preparedness plans, such as the Spills Management and Response Plan.
Acoustic Environment
Need for clarification on the studies and mitigation measures that will be implemented to manage potential increases in noise levels and vibrations during construction.
Alternatives Assessment (including Alternatives to the Project and Alternative Means)
Need for clarification on the feasibility and cost effectiveness of alternatives to the Project, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the ferry and/or its operations (e.g. electric ferry, icebreaker ferry, increasing the ferry frequency, having multiple ferries in operation, creating a priority wait line for members of Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation) • methods to maintain an open passage year-round for the existing ferry (e.g. ice breakers, underwater bubblers) • a bridge (e.g. one with a greater emphasis on active transports, a covered bridge to reduce need for maintenance such as de-icing and snow clearing) • a bridge and tunnel combination
Request for information on the consideration and feasibility of an alternative route for the Project that minimizes adverse effects to woodlands, wetlands and sensitive habitat near the Sand Islands.
Cumulative Effects
Concerns related to cumulative effects of other projects in or near Lake Simcoe, and the effects of potential future development on Georgina Island.
Effects of the Environment on the Project
Need for further information on the resilience of the Project to climate change, including potential effects of weather extremes (e.g., flooding, ice pileup, ice heaving) on the Project.
Fish and Fish Habitat
Need for further information on potential effects of the Project on fish and fish habitat, including effects to shallow water habitat, Northern Pike spawning habitat, and aquatic plants. Need for further details on the proposed mitigation measures and monitoring plans to manage fish and fish habitat.

Geology and Soils
Concerns related to the stability of the existing substrate on the lakebed, including the Sand Islands, and whether the lakebed can support the causeways and bridge.
Human Health and Well-Being
Concerns about potential effects of the Project on drinking and recreational water quality, country foods, and the associated human health risks.
Indigenous Peoples' Current Use of Lands and Resources for Traditional Purposes
Need for information on potential effects of the Project on the ability (e.g. accessibility) of Indigenous peoples to fish, and the associated mitigation measures.
Indigenous Peoples' Exercise of Aboriginal and/or Treaty Rights
Comments that emphasized the potential of the Project to strengthen the exercise of Treaty rights for Williams Treaties First Nations by improving access to Georgina Island.
Indigenous Peoples' Health and Well-being
Comments that emphasized the ability of and convenience for residents on Georgina Island, including elderly residents, to access health care services (e.g. emergency services) on the mainland.
Concerns about the potential for increase in crime and drug use on Georgina Island, due to the Project providing increased access to the island.
Indigenous Peoples' Social and Economic Conditions
Comments that emphasized the benefits of the Project on access to education and extra-curricular activities for youth living on Georgina Island.
Comments that emphasized the benefits of the Project on access to employment, including youth employment, for residents of Georgina Island, as well as benefits to the labour pool for local businesses.
Comments that emphasized the time-saving benefits of the Project for residents of Georgina Island.
Comments that emphasized the social benefits of the Project on residents of Georgina Island to access to municipal programs and services, especially in mitigating social isolation of the elderly who live on Georgina Island.
Indigenous Peoples' Spiritual, Physical, and Cultural Heritage
Need for more information on existing baseline cultural heritage conditions, and the potential direct or indirect impacts on these conditions, such as the built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes identified.
Need for clarification on whether the Project could impact underwater archaeological resources, and information on how the Project would meet the requirements of Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sports, Tourism and Culture Industry's Criteria for Evaluating Marine Archaeological Potential checklist.
Migratory Birds
Concerns about potential effects to migratory birds and their habitat, including effects to breeding, nesting, migration, and overwintering, due to physical or sensory disturbances during all phases of the Project.
Navigation and Navigable Waters
Need for more information on the potential interference with navigation on Lake Simcoe during construction and operation of the Project, and associated mitigation measures. Concerns that the Project would lead to unsafe navigability by boats and snowmobiles, due to a narrowed boat channel that would concentrate traffic, increase risk of collision, and weaken the ice for snowmobilers.
Need for the Project
Comments in support of the Project raised the need for the Project, citing the risks and accidents of the current methods of transportation.
Comments in opposition to the Project raised the costs of the Project and the size of the population the Project will serve.

Project Activities and Design
Comments on how the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan will be incorporated into the Project design and development of mitigation measures.
Need for information on project activities during the operation phase of the Project, including the types of maintenance activities required and the use of ice breakers, their potential effects to the environment, and the associated mitigation measures.
Public and Stakeholder Engagement
Comments that emphasized the Proponent's strong reputation and history of environmental protection.
Requests for direct engagement with local communities of Lake Simcoe.
Species at Risk, Wildlife, and their Habitat
Need for information about potential effects to species at risk and their habitat, including potential effects of invasive species, lighting and other sensory disturbances, contamination, spills, and increased mortality due to vehicle collisions. Need for further information on proposed mitigation measures and monitoring plans for effects to species at risk.
Traffic and Transit
Comments on traffic impacts and the need for transportation infrastructure improvements (e.g. local road network and associated maintenance, construction, increase of service levels, seasonal maintenance activities).
Recommendation to include measures to calm traffic at the road and causeway intersection on the mainland (e.g. stop sign, road bumps).
Use of Lands and Resources (Non-Indigenous)
Request for clarification on whether there will be restricted access to fishing areas, boat launches and water in Lake Simcoe during all phases of the Project.
Concerns about the changes in the visual landscape for residents on the mainland, including potential obstructions of views and the presence of additional lighting at night.
Concerns that sediment accumulation and potential changes in water flow would impair the enjoyment of living in or visiting the local area, including recreation (e.g. fishing, swimming, boating), accessing private docks, marinas, and waterfront properties.
Request for more information on the positive and negative impacts to the local tourism industry as a result of the Project.
Concerns about potential environmental and socioeconomic effects on Sibbald Point Provincial Park (e.g. changes in traffic, noise and water quality on wildlife and park users).
Vulnerable Population Groups (Gender-Based Analysis Plus)
Need for information on what measures will be taken to address potential inequalities between different population groups (e.g. women) in hiring for the Project.
Concerns about the potential for increase in gender-based violence, due to the fixed link providing increased access to the island.
Water
Recommendation to expand the study area to assess water quality, especially sedimentation, in areas between Sibbald Provincial Park to Duclos Point, including Virginia Beach, Island View Beach, Sunset Beach, Sunkist Beach, McRae Beach, and Woods Bay.
Need for further information on the potential changes to water flow, sediment deposition, water quantity and water quality due to the presence of causeways and piers.
Need for information on how the Project could affect ice pile-up, flooding, and wave action (e.g. wave up-rush overtopping), and the resulting potential changes to water quantity and quality.
Need for further information on stormwater management, including how road salt and de-icing materials will be managed to protect water quality.
Need for further information on the proposed fill (e.g. its stability, suitability, and transportation during construction) and potential changes to water quality that may be caused by the fill.
Need for clarification on the mitigation measures proposed to manage the potential encounter or disturbance of contaminated soils, and the potential residual effects to water quality.

Concerns about the potential for on-shore erosion and in-water erosion around the rock structures and piers. Need for further details on the Erosion and Sediment Control Plans that will be used to protect water quality during all phases of the Project.

Wetlands and Riparian Habitat

Need for further information on the potential effects to wetland function and the associated mitigation measures. Concerns related to impacts to Virginia Beach Wetland complex, and loss of wetlands for the construction of roadways and causeways.