



## GEORGINA ISLAND FIXED LINK PROJECT RESPONSES TO SUMMARY OF ISSUES

#	Description of the Issue	Response
<b>Accidents and Malfunctions</b>		
1	Need for further details on proposed accident and malfunction avoidance and response preparedness plans, such as the Spills Management and Response Plan.	<p>A comprehensive Accidents and Malfunctions Plan will be completed during the Detail Design phase. In the interim, further details regarding the Spills Management and Response Plan have been added to Section 20.4.2.5 of the Detailed Project Description (DPD), with other sections referring back to that section for details. This section now includes a framework for a Spills Management and Response Plan and examples of standard mitigation measures that will be included in the plan, including measures to prevent accidental spills, as well as a commitment to engage on the plan.</p> <p>This plan is also outlined in Section 5.4, Table B-20 of the DPD as a future study to be completed during the Detail Design phase.</p>
<b>Acoustic Environment</b>		
2	Need for clarification on the studies and mitigation measures that will be implemented to manage potential increases in noise levels and vibrations during construction.	<p>As outlined in Section 5.4, Table B-20, the Noise Impact Assessment Report (formerly referred to as the “Noise and Vibration Existing Conditions and Impact Study”) was drafted in 2023 and updated in 2025 based on new monitoring data. The study refers to the following Health Canada guidelines: Guidance for evaluating human health impacts in environmental assessment: Noise, 2017. The results from this study are documented in the new Appendix V.</p> <p>Section 14.6 summarizes the results of the ambient or background noise monitoring program (i.e., current conditions).</p> <p>Section 20.6.1 summarizes the findings of both the qualitative assessment and the predictive analysis of noise from the construction and operation phases of the Project, which was based on modelling to</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>determine the Project's impact on nearby noise sensitive land-uses and human receptors.</p> <p>Section 20.6.2 of the DPD describes potential mitigation measures, including a response plan for noise and vibration levels exceeding limits to be implemented as part of a planned Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan. Further mitigation measures will be validated and refined during the Detail Design phase.</p> <p>Based on findings of the Noise Impact Assessment Report and the Aquatic Existing Conditions Report for the Preferred Alignment, a detailed Underwater Noise and Vibration Impact Study will be undertaken during future design phases to specifically assess the potential for noise impact to fish species.</p>
<b>Alternatives Assessment (including Alternatives to the Project and Alternative Means)</b>		
3	<p>Need for clarification on the feasibility and cost effectiveness of alternatives to the Project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 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)</li> <li>– methods to maintain an open passage year-round for the existing ferry (e.g., ice breakers, underwater bubblers)</li> <li>– 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)</li> <li>– a bridge and tunnel combination</li> </ul>	<p>A more detailed discussion about alternatives to the Project, including feasibility and cost effectiveness, is presented in Section 12.2 Alternatives to the Project in the DPD.</p> <p>As indicated in the Initial Project Description (IPD), alternatives to a fixed link were originally developed through studies and preliminary analyses with GIFN and presented in the Proposed Fixed Link Study – Preliminary Evaluation of Engineering and Environmental Alternatives (Appendix A). These original alternatives are summarized in Section 12.2.</p> <p>In addition, following the 30-day public review of the IPD and in response to the Summary of Issues, three additional potential alternatives were proposed (a bridge, a bridge and tunnel combination, and methods to maintain an open passage year-round for the existing ferry). The evaluations of these alternatives are now also summarized in Section 12.2 of the DPD.</p> <p>Based on the evaluations completed to date, GIFN determined that a combination of bridge and causeway is the optimal solution to the transportation struggles currently faced by the island community.</p>



#	Description of the Issue	Response
4	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.	<p>Given changes to the proposed Project since the submission of the IPD, which more directly avoid impacts to the Sand Islands, the text in Section 12.1 of the DPD has been revised and augmented to better outline the ‘alternative means’ assessments that have been undertaken for the Project to-date. There is now distinctive terminology to refer to the various alternatives considered in each assessment. See Table C-3 for this outline. (Note: The evaluation of the Refined Alternative Alignments for the Preferred Route is now provided in Section 12.1.2.7, Table C-4).</p> <p>Specifically, the 2023 evaluation of Alternative Alignments for the Preferred Route (Section 12.1.2) describes how the preferred alignment (Refined Alternative Alignment #2) minimized adverse effects to woodlands, wetlands and sensitive habitat near the Sand Islands compared to the other two proposed refined alternative alignments.</p> <p>Alternatives to the design submitted in the IPD have been proposed and the preferred alignment refined to respond to concerns raised by stakeholders by reducing the impact on the environment. The design options reviewed and rational for selection of the new preferred design option are presented in new Section 12.3.</p>
<b>Cumulative Effects</b>		
5	Concerns related to cumulative effects of other projects in or near Lake Simcoe, and the effects of potential future development on Georgina Island.	<p>Section 5.5 of the DPD has been updated to explain that the rationale for the radius of 200 km was based on the “nearby assessments within 200 km” feature on IAAC’s Canadian Impact Assessment Registry page for the Project. This was used as a preliminary mechanism for identifying federal projects whose effects may interact with this Project. Section 5.5. now also indicates the sources used to identify other reasonably foreseeable developments, including those that are not subject to federal impact assessments (i.e., other projects subject to provincial and municipal assessments).</p> <p>The original statement that cumulative effects were not anticipated was based on the nature and location of the initial projects identified.</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>The project list and potential for interactions between the effects of the Project and the other reasonably foreseeable projects is preliminary for the purpose of the DPD.</p> <p>The link to the Project's Registry page in Section 5.5 and Appendix C, Row 5 of the final DPD was corrected to <a href="https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/83539">https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/83539</a>.</p> <p>Sections 7.2.3 and 15.8.5 and DPD now include a clarifying statement that the intent of the Project is not to increase future development or tourism on Georgina Island.</p>
<b>Effects of the Environment on the Project</b>		
6	<p>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.</p>	<p>The need to consider the effects of climate change on the Project has been identified as a priority for the Project.</p> <p>From 2012-2015, a Community Climate Change Adaptation Project was delivered collaboratively by the GIFN and the Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Resources (OCCIAR) to broaden the expertise within the community, and this project recommended adaptation measures to deal with current and future impacts of climate change. For further details see Section 5.3.2 of the DPD and Appendix J – Climate Change Adaptation Plan.</p> <p>A Climate Change Resiliency Assessment will be completed during the Detail Design phase to identify future climate change-related risks that the Project may be exposed to during its expected service life. The Climate Change Resiliency Assessment will help to identify any potential vulnerabilities related to climate change over the lifetime of the Project, including recommendations for mitigation measures.</p> <p>Section 20.4.1.1 outlines some of the considerations that will be taken into account during the design phase to assess the capabilities of the system during higher intensity rainfall scenarios specifically.</p> <p>Section 20.4.2.8 discusses the Climate Resiliency Plan that was prepared in 2023, which outlines the approach to assess the Project's resiliency to climate change. For further details also see Appendix P of</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>the DPD.</p> <p>See section 20.7.1.4 for information on anticipated climate change effects to the ice environment, including the implementation of bridge pier and causeway designs for the Project to break the ice flows and minimize ice pileup. For further information on the Coastal Engineering Study, see response to SOI #40.</p>
<b>Fish and Fish Habitat</b>		
7	<p>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.</p> <p>Need for further details on the proposed mitigation measures and monitoring plans to manage fish and fish habitat.</p>	<p>An additional field program was completed in 2023 to gather additional baseline data within the Study Area for the preferred alignment, including confirmation of the presence of sensitive areas previously identified (e.g., Northern Pike and Walleye spawning habitat). Further details on the results of the 2023 field program are documented in Section 14.2.2, and in the Aquatic Existing Conditions Report for the Preferred Alignment (Appendix T2).</p> <p>The assessment of the potential effects to fish and fish habitat, including effects to shallow water habitat, Northern Pike spawning habitat, and aquatic plants are presented in Section 19.1.1. The corresponding mitigation recommendations are presented in Section 19.1.2 and will continue to be refined as the Project advances through the Detail Design stage and through future permitting processes.</p> <p>Mitigation, offsetting and/or overall benefit measures will be determined in engagement with relevant regulatory agencies such as DFO. Other regulators such as the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and ECCC, and subject matter experts such as the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) will also be consulted through future permitting processes as appropriate</p>
<b>Geology and Soils</b>		
8	<p>Concerns related to the stability of the existing substrate on the lakebed, including the Sand Islands, and whether the lakebed can support the</p>	<p>As now described in Section 9.2, and as outlined in Section 5.4, Table B-20, a geotechnical investigation program has been completed to</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
	causeways and bridge.	<p>help identify the nature of subsurface layers and their engineering properties, which informed an evaluation of the stability of the geotechnical conditions, as well as against excessive settlement and potential geotechnical failures. The data obtained were analyzed, and the results of the geotechnical investigation has been used to update the preliminary design. The geotechnical investigation and the subsequent analysis will be reviewed to recommend next steps, as well as requirements for further assessment. The final design will be reliant on the findings of further geotechnical investigations.</p> <p>Engagement on the investigation will include consultation with subject matter experts, such as the LSRCA and DFO, that may have a role in reviewing the proposed work plan before it is initiated. Once the results are prepared, engagement will consist of review and acceptance of the design by representatives of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation (GIFN), and any regulators that require the results as part of their review and approval process.</p>
<b>Human Health and Well-Being</b>		
9	Concerns about potential effects of the Project on drinking and recreational water quality, country foods, and the associated human health risks.	<p>Section 15.2.4 of the DPD identifies country foods and medicinal sources that GIFN have identified; however, to date community members have not raised concerns regarding impacts of the project on these foods or human health.</p> <p>Further information regarding country foods was gathered during consultation calls pertaining to other First Nation allies, who confirmed that the list was considered comprehensive and satisfied the consultation departments' lists of the First Nations. Consultation departments indicated a need to periodically review and possibly update this list as possible impacts may be identified over the duration of the Project.</p> <p>Furthermore, the results of fish and fish habitat surveys have been documented in Section 14.2.2 and Appendix T2 (see response to SOI #7) and will be used to inform an assessment of impacts to fish species that are considered country food. Similarly, the Terrestrial</p>



#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>Existing Conditions Report for the Preferred Alignment (Appendix T3) will be used to identify plant species that may be considered country food and could inform an assessment of whether the quality or quantity of such species may be impacted. If effects to the health of the species are predicted, the results could be carried to an assessment of potential human health risks related to food consumption. Effects of the Project on drinking and recreational water quality would follow a similar approach.</p> <p>Thus, potential effects of the Project on country foods, and other human health risks and corresponding mitigation measures, will be informed by an assessment of the potential pathways of effects to those foods or human health and the need for mitigation measures beyond those proposed to directly mitigate effects to the biophysical environment.</p> <p>For further information regarding the detailed hydrogeological study, refer to the response to SOI #38.</p>
<p><b>Indigenous Peoples' Current Use of Lands and Resources for Traditional Purposes</b></p>		
<p>10</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Section 15.3.3.1 of the DPD was updated to provide information regarding fishing areas / fishing points identified by Indigenous communities. Except for GIFN fishing areas, no other fishing areas have been identified. The GIFN areas are not located within proximity of the proposed fixed link alignments.</p> <p>As mentioned in response row #9, information regarding country foods was gathered during consultation calls pertaining to other First Nation allies, and no comments regarding land use in the area were received. The list of country foods was considered comprehensive, though opportunity to review and update the list over the duration of the Project was requested.</p> <p>Table F-5 in Section 21.1.4.2 has been updated to identify potential impacts and corresponding mitigation measures on the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by Indigenous communities. (Note: Section 21.1.3, Table F-6 is now Section 21.1.4.2,</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>Table F-5).</p> <p>If additional information becomes available, the Project Team will consider information about fishing areas in the Study Area that are important to other Indigenous communities, and will identify potential impacts on the fishing areas used for traditional purposes, including potential impacts on access to fishing and country foods, and proposed mitigation measures.</p>
<b>Indigenous Peoples' Exercise of Aboriginal and/or Treaty Rights</b>		
11	<p>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.</p>	<p>While the Project is not expected to strengthen WTFNs' abilities to exercise Treaty rights on the island, it will increase the ability for GIFN members, who are WTFN signatories, to access the mainland, increasing their ability to exercise their treaty rights within their territory.</p> <p>Regardless, Indigenous communities considered to have real or asserted interactions within the proposed study area for the Project have been, and will continue to be, engaged during all phases of the Project.</p> <p>As outlined in section 4.3 of the DPD, GIFN has received Letters of Support from each of the Williams Treaty First Nation (WTFN) Chiefs on behalf of the following communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curve Lake First Nation (August 10, 2021)</li> <li>• Chippewas of Rama First Nation (September 13, 2021)</li> <li>• Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (September 13, 2021)</li> <li>• Alderville First Nation (September 13, 2021)</li> <li>• Hiawatha First Nation (September 15, 2021)</li> <li>• Beausoleil First Nation (September 15, 2021)</li> </ul> <p>Since receiving those letters, WTFNs have continued to be engaged in the Project. In January 2024, an engagement session with the WTFNs provided an update presentation on the pre-feasibility planning for the</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		Fixed Link project and an opportunity to gather feedback from WTFN consultation staff.
<b>Indigenous Peoples' Health and Well-being</b>		
12	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.	<p>These comments support the need for the Project. In relation to Indigenous People's health and well-being, a list of potential positive effects of the Project are found in sections 22.1, 22.2 and 22.3 of the DPD. This includes consistent year-round, two-way access to health care and medical services (e.g., physicians and mental health services), emergency services (e.g., ambulance services), and additional safety and security (e.g., external police services). See the Fixed Link Socio-Economic Study (Appendix B) for further details on potential health and safety benefits of the Project.</p> <p>Some of the Project benefits related to health and wellbeing include, but are not limited to: ambulance services will be quicker and more reliable especially in winter months since emergency vehicles cannot travel on ice and stretchers cannot fit in airboats; reduced travel time and transportation costs will lower costs of food and necessities, improving mental health; safe access to medical appointments scheduled during winter months; and overall cost of services will be reduced due to better access to the island.</p>
13	Concerns about the potential for increase in crime and drug use on Georgina Island, due to the Project providing increased access to the island.	<p>The DPD (sections 15.2.2, 22.1 and 22.2) acknowledges that crime on the Island may increase as more criminal elements have easier access to the Island. Mitigation measures are identified for both construction and long-term operations to help minimize an increase in unwanted activities.</p> <p>Section 22.2.4.2 of the DPD has been updated to include detailed information about the Health and Safety (H&amp;S) Plan, as well as requirements for the contractor to have a strong health and safety management system and mitigation measures that are specific to substance use, harassment and other social concerns. The H&amp;S Plan will be prepared by the contractor prior to construction and will outline practical measures to eliminate or control risks to the health, safety</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>and welfare of workers, contractors and the public in accordance with relevant legislation and applicable Codes of Practice.</p> <p>Regarding engagement, the H&amp;S Plan will be reviewed and approved by representative of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation prior to implementation to ensure that all commitments are incorporated.</p>
<b>Indigenous Peoples' Social and Economic Conditions</b>		
14	<p>Comments that emphasized the benefits of the Project on access to education and extra-curricular activities for youth living on Georgina Island.</p>	<p>These comments support the need for the Project. The Fixed Link Socio-Economic Study (Appendix B) explored potential negative and positive effects of the Project on education. A description of these effects is included in Section 22.2 of the DPD, which discusses potential impacts to island culture, Indigenous culture, education and recreation.</p> <p>The Project will have positive educational benefits to the youth residing on Georgina Island. Although there are concerns pertaining to the social 'island' fabric of the community being somewhat lost, it is believed that this improved access to education on the mainland will outweigh this concern in the long-term. One of the most significant benefits will be that children and youths are able to stay at home throughout the whole school year without billeting during freeze up and thaw season. Students will be able to have uninterrupted travel, by bus or personal vehicle, to school on the mainland, rather than using the airboat in the winter months or bus by ferry during warmer months. This will reduce travel time to allow youth to have reliable year-round, two-way access to and from school or extracurricular activities, which will negate tardiness or absenteeism due to unexpected ferry issues.</p>
15	<p>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.</p>	<p>These comments support the need for the Project. The Fixed Link Socio-Economic Study (Appendix B) explored potential negative and positive effects of the Project on employment. A description of these effects is included in Section 22.3 of the DPD, which discusses potential impacts to economic conditions.</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>The Project will have positive employment benefits within the community. One of the most significant benefits to the residents of Georgina Island is greater opportunities for a more qualified workforce to be developed with access to employment-related services on and off the island. In addition, reductions in travel time due to the Project will result in more qualified/educated GIFN members coming home to work.</p>
16	<p>Comments that emphasized the time-saving benefits of the Project for residents of Georgina Island.</p>	<p>These comments support the need for the Project. Section 22.3.1.1 of the DPD has been revised to emphasize the positive economic effects of the Project (e.g., reduced time and costs of construction projects as materials can be delivered on demand rather than being based on ferry boat).</p>
17	<p>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.</p>	<p>These comments support the need for the Project. The Fixed Link Socio-Economic Study (Appendix B) explored potential negative and positive effects of the Project on social and recreation aspects of the GIFN community. A description of these effects is included in Section 22.2 of the DPD.</p> <p>A fixed link is critical infrastructure to support the advancement of Georgina Island with reliable year-round, two-way access to essential and non-essential programs and services on the mainland. The construction of the fixed link will have positive social and recreational benefits to residents of Georgina Island. The fixed link will help to improve GIFN community members' overall mental health, including the sense of social isolation by having the ability to schedule social plans without worrying about the ferry schedule and weather-related delays or having to secure accommodation to stay the night on the mainland.</p>
<p><b>Indigenous Peoples' Spiritual, Physical, and Cultural Heritage</b></p>		
18	<p>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.</p>	<p>As described in Section 15.7.2, the Cultural Heritage Report (Appendix O1) documented known and potential Built Heritage Resources (BHRs) and Cultural Heritage Landscapes (CLHs) within the Project</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>study area.</p> <p>The Cultural Heritage Report completed by WSP in 2022 (Appendix O1) determined that due to the potential for direct impacts to Lake Simcoe from the Project, the development of a CHER was recommended.</p> <p>In 2025, a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER; Appendix O2) was completed. The CHER provides a high-level cultural heritage integrity analysis, including the documentation of the existing conditions of the Project study area and the historical context for Indigenous use, European contact since the early 17th century, and the evolving landscape since the mid-20th century. In this evaluation, a draft Statement of Cultural heritage Value and Interest (CHVI) and a list of heritage attributes for the study area was provided. See Section 6 of Appendix O2 for further details. In addition, the CHER established that the Study Area has CHVI per Ontario Regulation (O. Reg.) 9/06 of the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> (OHA). The methodology of the CHER adhered to the policies and direction set out through engagement with the Ontario MCM. Sections 15.7.2 and 21.1.3 of the DPD describe and summarize the results of the CHER, including proposed mitigation measures to conserve the heritage attributes of the CHL and the recommendation to prepare a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).</p> <p>The HIA will be completed during Detail Design phase of the Project. Engagement with Indigenous communities will be conducted prior to the initiation of the CHER, as part of the Project Team’s overall commitment to engagement.</p> <p>Where avoidance is not possible, mitigation measures provided in the HIA will be developed in consultation with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation.</p>
19	<p>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.</p>	<p>Section 15.7.1.1 of the DPD has been augmented to indicate that, per the results of the Marine Desktop Archaeological Assessment (Appendix Q1), there are no registered archaeological sites within the preferred alignment, and the features identified during a site inspection in October 2022 (timber rock filled docks) will be avoided and will not</p>



#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>be directly impacted. Text was added to Section 15.7.1.1 to indicate that Appendix Q1 considered and addressed MCM's Criteria for Evaluating Marine Archaeological Potential checklist.</p> <p>Section 21.1.1 of the DPD has been augmented to indicate that a further assessment is recommended to determine whether there are any buried archaeological resources within the areas of marine archaeological potential identified in the Appendix Q1, and whether they may be impacted by the Project.</p> <p>In addition, a Marine Archeological Impact Assessment (2025) (Appendix Q2), that was completed for the preliminary geotechnical investigation, determined that 5 boreholes along the proposed bridge alignment indicate that there is potential for an intact archaeological landscape in the lakebed substrate. Further marine archaeological assessments and surveys are recommended prior to any disturbance of the lakebed within areas identified as having potential for marine archaeological resources.</p>
<b>Migratory Birds</b>		
20	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.	<p>Section 14.2.3.2.4 has been updated to include a description of the additional bird surveys that were undertaken in 2023.</p> <p>The Terrestrial Existing Conditions Report for the Preferred Alignment (Appendix T3) was completed based on these bird surveys, and the results have been documented in Section 19.3.1 to refine the assessment of potential effects of the Project to migratory birds, and in Section 19.3.2 to refine the corresponding mitigation measures.</p> <p>The assessment of the project effects, specific to migratory birds, and the corresponding mitigation recommendations will continue to be refined as the Project advances into the Detail Design stage. Mitigation, offsetting and/or overall benefit measures will be determined in engagement with relevant regulatory agencies (e.g., ECCC, MECP) through future consultation, or permitting processes where required.</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		Note: the list of bird species at risk is now included in Section 14.2.3.2.4.1, Table D-4.
<b>Navigation and Navigable Waters</b>		
21	<p>Need for more information on the potential interference with navigation on Lake Simcoe during construction and operation of the Project, and associated mitigation measures.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Sections 15.5 and 20.9 of the DPD have been updated to reflect the findings of the navigation impact assessment that was carried out as part of the Coastal Engineering Report (Appendix Y). It describes the bridge dimensions, boat traffic through the bridge openings, navigation requirements related to the vertical clearance between the vessel and the bridge and channel width, and the anticipated impacts to navigation due to the construction of proposed bridge and causeway.</p> <p>The navigation requirements identified will inform the Detail Design to help ensure that the clear spans of the bridge, including pier protection, will satisfy the needs of Lake Simcoe requirements and the pier locations will not significantly affect the navigation within the Study Area. Also, the maximum required height for navigation will identify the minimum clearance from the water surface to the soffit of the bridge that will identify the vertical profile of the link.</p> <p>The DPD has also been updated to indicate that an application for authorization under the <i>Canadian Navigable Waters Act</i> will be required and that process will include a 30-day public consultation period.</p>
<b>Need for the Project</b>		
22	<p>Comments in support of the Project raised the need for the Project, citing the risks and accidents of the current methods of transportation.</p>	<p>These comments support the need for the Project. Section 7 of the DPD has been updated to more clearly outline the purpose and need for the Project, which is to provide reliable and safe two-way travel between Georgina Island and the mainland, including considerations for health and safety and socio-economic benefits.</p> <p>Health and safety issues associated with current means of transportation (i.e., ferry, airboat, etc.) to cross between Georgina</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>Island and the mainland have caused the GIFN community great hardship.</p> <p>A Health Impact Assessment of Transportation Options to and from Georgina Island (Appendix G) was completed in 2021 to evaluate the potential positive and negative impacts on the health and well-being of members of the GIFN community that may result due to current transportation options available to them, based on current and future changes in environmental conditions (for further details see sections 5.3.9 of the DPD).</p>
23	<p>Comments in opposition to the Project raised the costs of the Project and the size of the population the Project will serve.</p>	<p>The GIFN community currently relies predominately on the Aazhaawe Ferry, which operates from the mainland to Georgina Island and has been funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to date. The current transportation options have caused several health and safety issues for the community, including loss of life (see DPD, Section 7 Purpose and Need for the Project). Other means of transportation between Georgina Island and the mainland include airboat, which are 12 passenger air-propelled vehicles, and during freezing months snowmobiles and personal cars are used to cross over icy water through ice roads. These ice roads have a history of being unstable and unpredictable and thus being an unreliable mean of transportation between Georgina Island and the mainland.</p> <p>While it may be perceived that the anticipated cost of the Project is high compared to the size of the GIFN community and the greater community on Georgina Island, GIFN has deemed the cost reasonable to avoid future loss of life.</p>
<p><b>Project Activities and Design</b></p>		
24	<p>Comments on how the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan will be incorporated into the Project design and development of mitigation measures.</p>	<p>An explanation for what might trigger the LSPP has been added to Section 5.2.1, along with a commitment that the Project Team will consult further with provincial regulators, such as the MNR, regarding the applicability of permits or approvals that may trigger the application of the LSPP, and also confirm the expectations in relation to</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>conformance with the LSPP.</p> <p>Regardless of the legislative and policy requirements, the GIFN was involved in the development of the LSPP and is committed to abiding by the spirit of the plan's requirements to protect Lake Simcoe's water quality (e.g., by protecting the shoreline, restoring or enhancing natural features, working with DFO for Fisheries Act authorization, maintaining the natural flow of water along the shoreline, and designing the bridge's stormwater management to meet modern design standards so it is not contributing phosphorus loadings to the watershed). As such, consideration of the protections of the LSPP have been incorporated into various sections of this DPD, and will continue to be recognized throughout the planning and permitting processes (e.g., MNR work/occupation permits, and DFO Fisheries Act authorizations as appropriate).</p> <p>For sections of this DPD that address potential effects and mitigation measures directly relevant to provisions of the LSPP, please specifically refer to the following, though other sections may be relevant as well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 19.1 Fish and Aquatic Habitat,</li> <li>• Section 20.2 Natural Environment,</li> <li>• Section 20.4 Stormwater / Drainage,</li> <li>• Section 20.7 Coastal Environment</li> <li>• Section 20.9 Navigation</li> </ul>
25	<p>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.</p>	<p>Section 9.4 of the DPD has been augmented to present the project activities that are anticipated during the operation and maintenance phases of the Project, including proactive maintenance measures. Typical operation and maintenance activities include de-icing and salt management during winter months and drainage and stormwater management, which provides essential protection of Lake Simcoe and the surrounding natural environment. Environmental monitoring is also anticipated.</p>



#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>GIFN is working to confirm the group or entity that will oversee operations and maintenance of the fixed link (whether an outside entity or in-house by GIFN), as well as the long-term source of funding for these activities. Final decisions regarding the operation, monitoring and maintenance of the fixed link will be captured in an Operations and Maintenance Management Plan that will be prepared during a later design phase of the Project.</p>
<p><b>Public and Stakeholder Engagement</b></p>		
<p><b>26</b></p>	<p>Comments that emphasized the Proponent’s strong reputation and history of environmental protection.</p>	<p>The GIFN appreciates that our strong reputation and history of environmental protections was recognized in the comments IAAC received. The GIFN have developed a set of Environmental Principles for the Project (Appendix I) to be applied by community leadership, staff, members, advisors and service providers driving the Project. These Environmental Principles are intended to maintain transparency, guide decisions and project evaluation activities to ensure that Mother Earth is respected at every stage of the process.</p> <p>See the beginning text of Part F of the DPD for further information about the GIFN Environmental Principles.</p>
<p><b>27</b></p>	<p>Requests for direct engagement with local communities of Lake Simcoe.</p>	<p>Since the draft DPD, the GIFN has conducted direct engagement with stakeholders and targeted public groups that have an interest in the Project (e.g. Lake Simcoe South Residents Association and the Virginia Beach/Sutton Community). The DPD (Section 3) has been updated with details about the events and the results of the engagement activities that have taken place since the submission of the IPD (e.g., changes to the preliminary design). Section 3 has also been updated with a revised list of stakeholder groups that have expressed an interest or have local knowledge in relation to the Project, including those that commented on the IPD and those that expressed interest in engagement events.</p> <p>The DPD also includes information about the plan for ongoing and future engagement activities with non-Indigenous peoples and how new comments received as part of future public engagement activities</p>



#	Description of the Issue	Response
		will be addressed and incorporated into the Project planning, including on the Project's design or in shaping mitigation or monitoring measures.
<b>Species at Risk, Wildlife, and their Habitat</b>		
28	<p>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.</p> <p>Need for further information on proposed mitigation measures and monitoring plans for effects to species at risk.</p>	<p>Since the time of the IPD reporting, there have been updates to the proposed Project to minimize environmental impacts and additional natural environment studies have been completed. As such, the baseline information regarding species at risk (SAR) and their habitat has been updated in Section 14.2., and anticipated effects have been updated in Section 19.2 (aquatic species) and Section 20.2.5 (terrestrial species). These sections also include respective mitigation measures.</p> <p>For aquatic species, DFO stated as part of its review of the draft IPD (2021) that “there are currently no aquatic species listed federally under the <i>Species at Risk Act</i> mapped for the proposed Project locations” This will be confirmed again with DFO during future study phases. At this time, construction of the Project is not anticipated to have any adverse effects on aquatic SAR.</p> <p>For terrestrial SAR, there were 11 federally and/or provincially protected (i.e., Endangered and Threatened) SAR observed in the study area during 2022 and 2023 field surveys and/or confirmed through the background data review and agency consultation (See Section 14.2.3.2.8.1 of the DPD). It is anticipated that a <i>Species at Risk Act</i> authorization will be required for several of the species that have been confirmed and whose habitat or individuals may be impacted by the Project. The Project’s direct and indirect effects to SAR and SAR habitat will be determined and quantified as part of federal SARA permitting process.</p> <p>Permitting, including mitigation and compensation measures, will be determined in consultation with ECCC during the Detail Design phase (see Section 20.2.5 of the DPD). Some of the mitigation measures anticipated to be required to protect terrestrial SAR are outlined in</p>



#	Description of the Issue	Response
		Section 20.2.5.2 of the DPD.
<b>Traffic and Transit</b>		
29	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).	<p>A Transportation Impact Study was completed to identify the impacts and potential improvements such as left-turn lanes, right-turn lanes, signalization (if warranted) and recommend the lanes configurations at key intersections (Appendix N). Prior to initiating the TIS, a TIS Terms of Reference was submitted to the Town of Georgina and York Region for review. York Region also circulated the TOR to York Region Transit (YRT) and Student Transportation Services of York Region (STSYR). The TIS was completed on October 4, 2023. Key comments on the TIS Terms of Reference, as well as how the comments were addressed in the TIS, are summarized in Section 3.4.11 of the DPD and detailed correspondence is provided in Appendix F.</p> <p>An overview of the results of this study is included in Sections 15.4 and 20.8 of the DPD.</p>
30	Recommendation to include measures to calm traffic at the road and causeway intersection on the mainland (e.g., stop sign, road bumps).	<p>A Transportation Impact Study (Appendix N) was completed to identify recommended lane configuration and potential traffic control improvements. Results of this study are included in Section 15.4 and 20.8 of the DPD. Based on this study, a review of the need for traffic calming measures is not included in the scope of the TIS. The TIS includes the recommended lane configuration and traffic control, and as part of the fixed link design criteria, recommendations for design and posted speeds, lane configurations and lane width are provided (See Sections 9.2 and 20.8 of the DPD).</p> <p>Traffic calming measures are typically assessed in neighbourhoods where traffic speeding is an issue. Traffic calming based on existing conditions is typically a municipal initiative. Once the bridge/causeway is operational and if speeding is an issue, consideration could be given to initiating a separate study at that stage.</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
<b>Use of Lands and Resources (Non-Indigenous)</b>		
31	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.	<p>Per Section 15.3.3.1, the GIFN sets up ice fishing huts on the east and west sides of the ice road, and along the existing ferry line, to fish for yellow perch in the winter. These areas are not located within proximity of the Project; therefore, no potential effects are expected to impede the ability to fish in those areas. Fishing within the Sand Island area is avoided as ice can be treacherous due to currents.</p> <p>There are currently three boat launches located on the mainland, and each are located far from the Project. Therefore, access to existing boat launches will likely remain unrestricted during the development of the Project. See section 15.3.3 of the DPD for further information.</p> <p>Temporary restrictions to Lake Simcoe water within the Project area are anticipated to be limited to the construction phase of the Project.</p> <p>See Section 20.9.1 of the DPD for further information about the assessment of the results of the Navigation Impact Assessment (Appendix Y). The spans between piers will be confirmed in the final bridge design. Currently, it is proposed that the high-level bridge will provide 10 m clearance from maximum water level for vessels, with the proposed horizontal clearance at the widest point being approximately 150 m. The low-level bridge is proposed to provide adequate clearance for small vessels such as canoes and kayaks.</p>
32	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.	As outlined in Section 5.4, Table 20 of the DPD, a Lighting Plan will be completed during the Detail Design phase to depict where lighting on the bridge, causeway and roadway intersections will be proposed to accommodate the Project. This plan will need to take into consideration mitigation measures identified in the DPD to minimize environmental impacts (e.g., per Section 19.3.2, the plan will need to incorporate stationary lighting designs that consider the effects to adjacent wildlife habitat and other design measures that could assist with minimizing noise and light disturbances).

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>Also outlined in Section 5.4, Table 20, is a Visual Impact Study that will be undertaken in the Detail Design phase to assess potential impacts or changes to the scenic attributes of the visual landscape because of the Project</p>
<p><b>33</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>A Lake Simcoe numerical model was developed to simulate the water level, currents, wave and sediment transport conditions for existing and post-construction conditions using the Delft3D Flexible Mesh (FM) package. The Lake Simcoe numerical model consists of hydrodynamic model component, wave model component and sediment transport model component. The modeling results as well as the anticipated changes to the coastal environment associated with the Project are outlined in Section 20.7.1 of the DPD.</p> <p>Overall, the modelling shows that the construction of the causeway and bridge is expected to have limited impact on hydrodynamics, wave patterns, and sediment transport; however, it is expected to bring about some changes such as narrowing the flow area, increasing velocities, altering wave heights, and leading to localized erosion and sedimentation.</p> <p>More details about the numerical modeling including approach, data used, model calibration, results, discussion and conclusion are provided in the Coastal Engineering Study (Appendix Y).</p> <p>In addition, an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan will be prepared to outline the measures to be put in place during construction to prevent or minimize erosion and sediment release into Lake Simcoe. This plan is anticipated to be completed during the Detail Design phase.</p>
<p><b>34</b></p>	<p>Request for more information on the positive and negative impacts to the local tourism industry as a result of the Project.</p>	<p>Section 7.2 (Need for the Project) explicitly states that the intent of the project is not to increase future development or tourism on Georgina Island, during construction or operation. While minor positive impacts are possible, no significant positive or negative impacts to tourism are expected as a result of the Project, during construction or operation.</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
35	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).	<p>Sibbald Point Provincial Park is a Recreation Class Park, located to the west outside the study area. The Project will not have a direct effect on Sibbald Point Provincial Park as the preferred alignment is located approximately 500 m east of the park boundary (see Sections 14.2.3.2.2.3 and 20.2.1.1 of the DPD).</p> <p>The Project is anticipated to bring a multitude of socioeconomic benefits to the project study area and the surrounding region, some of these benefits include improved access for Georgina Island residents to the recreation areas and parks on the mainland side; ability for GIFN members to schedule social events and extra-curricular activities on the mainland side. These benefits are explained in Section 22.2 of the DPD and in Appendix B.</p>
<b>Vulnerable Population Groups (Gender-Based Analysis Plus)</b>		
36	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.	<p>The DPD Sections 22.1.3 Safety and Security have been updated to describe potential inequalities that may be faced by different population groups (e.g., women) during the Project and explain what measures will be put in place to address the potential inequalities.</p> <p>The DPD Section 22.2 has also been updated to specify that the contractor will be required to implement mandatory training for diversity and inclusion and related topics and explore options to increase the representation of Indigenous women and gender diverse individuals in the workforce.</p> <p>Section 22.3 also includes a discussion of the GIFN's Procurement Principles, which include, for example, the principle of human inclusion, which requires a concerted effort by suppliers to ensure all humans are provided equal opportunity to participate in this project.</p>
37	Concerns about the potential for increase in gender-based violence, due to the fixed link providing increased access to the island.	<p>Section 15.3.1.3 of the DPD has been updated to include publicly available information for Ontario regarding gender-based violence as part of the baseline conditions.</p> <p>The DPD Section 22.2 has also been updated to specify that the</p>



#	Description of the Issue	Response
		contractor must establish policies that are specific to protecting the safety and security of the community and the public, and specifically Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people.
<b>Water</b>		
38	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.	<p>Since the submission of the IPD, a Coastal Engineering Study, which consisted of field investigations, hydrodynamic, wave, and sediment modelling, shoreline evolution assessment, ice analysis, and a navigation impact assessment, was completed (see response to SOI #40). These reports have informed the preliminary assessment of potential impacts and mitigation measures identified in the DPD (Sections 19, 20, 21 and 22).</p> <p>Results from a sediment transport study using field measurements and numerical modelling indicated that expected changes from the Project are within the range of natural variability in the area with minimal changes along the majority of the shoreline adjacent to the project site.</p> <p>Section 20.7 has been updated to indicate that the construction of the causeway and bridge will have a limited impact on the hydrodynamics, wave patterns, and sediment transport of the lake. However, it is expected to result in some local changes in the immediate vicinity of the structure, such as narrowing the flow area, increasing velocities, altering wave heights, and leading to localized erosion and sedimentation.</p>
39	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.	<p>Sections of the DPD and its Appendices that referenced ongoing or future studies have been updated since the submission of the IPD as many of the studies have progressed since that time.</p> <p>Specifically, a 2023 field program was completed to supplement the 2022 surveys and to gather additional natural environment data. The existing conditions have been documented in an Aquatic Existing Conditions Report (Appendix T2 of the DPD), and a Terrestrial Existing Conditions Report (Appendix T3 of the DPD). A Coastal Engineering Study, which consisted of field investigations, hydrodynamic, wave,</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>and sediment modelling, shoreline evolution assessment, ice analysis, and a navigation impact assessment, was also completed (see response to SOI # 40). These reports have informed the preliminary assessment of potential impacts and mitigation measures identified in the DPD (Sections 19, 20, 21 and 22).</p> <p>Further, Section 5.4, Table B-20, outlines the Surface Water Quality Impact Study as a future study to be completed during Detail Design phase.</p>
40	<p>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.</p>	<p>A Coastal Engineering Report was completed by WSP in September 2024 (Appendix Y). The study consisted of field investigations, hydrodynamic, wave, and sediment modelling, shoreline evolution assessment, ice analysis, and navigation impact assessment to characterize baseline coastal environment conditions and assesses potential impacts of the preferred alignment. Section 14.7 now describes the baseline coastal environment conditions of the study area.</p> <p>The results from the coastal study will address the impacts of proposed causeway and bridge on currents, sediment transport, shoals, and mainland shoreline, Navigation Impact study and provide input to causeway bridge design. These results were primarily considered for Sections 19.1 (Fish and Aquatic Habitat), 20.7 (Coastal Environment) and 20.9 (Navigation).</p> <p>As described in Section 20.1.1, requirements to manage excess soils, and address the potential to encounter or disturb contaminated soils or sediments, will be informed by the completion of the Geotechnical and Geophysical Investigation Programs, as well as future Environmental Site Assessment work to be complete at the 66% design stage. These programs and appropriate quality sampling, as discussed in Section 24, will help determine types of waste and how the contractor will need to mitigate and manage such materials to prevent further dispersion and identify approved disposal methods.</p> <p>Further, Section 5.4, Table B-20, outlines the Surface Water Quality Impact Study as a future study to be completed during Detail Design</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		phase.
41	Need for further information on stormwater management, including how road salt and de-icing materials will be managed to protect water quality.	<p>As part of the roadway component, operation and maintenance activities, de-icing methodology, salt management and stormwater management are considered typical activities for the proposed Project. Mitigation measures for these activities are outlined in Section 20.4.2 of the DPD.</p> <p>The Stormwater Management (SWM) strategy for the Project Area is specifically discussed in Section 20.4.2.1 of the DPD. It will, at a minimum, meet the requirements highlighted in the provincial and municipal design guidelines.</p> <p>The Project will also meet requirements and guidelines recommended by the MECP for management of sodium chloride (salt) as a de-icing compound (see Section 20.4.2.4 of the DPD for more information).</p>
42	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.	<p>Section 9.3.1 of the DPD discusses the process required to transport the proposed fill, as well as its suitability, stability, and transportation during construction.</p> <p>The precise specifications, source(s) and characteristics of the materials will be determined in the Detail Design phase.</p>
43	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.	See response to SOI #40.
44	<p>Concerns about the potential for on-shore erosion and in-water erosion around the rock structures and piers.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The DPD acknowledges that construction activities accelerate natural processes of erosion and sedimentation as vegetation is stripped away and soil is left exposed.</p> <p>Consequently, the DPD explores various means for prevention and effective erosion and sediment control (ESC) from the proposed Project construction site. Several standard mitigation measures have been incorporated into the DPD and will be taken as a minimum during construction to mitigate potential effects on the surrounding natural environment. The preliminary ESC measures proposed to date are</p>

#	Description of the Issue	Response
		<p>primarily discussed in relation to protection of fish and fish habitat in Section 19.1.2, soils in section 20.1.2, groundwater in Section 20.3.2, and the coastal environment in Section 20.7.2.</p> <p>During the Detail Design stage, a detailed Erosion and Sediment Control Plan will be prepared to recommend methodologies to be put in place during construction of the fixed link to prevent or minimize erosion and sediment release into Lake Simcoe.</p>
<b>Wetlands and Riparian Habitat</b>		
45	<p>Need for further information on the potential effects to wetland function and the associated mitigation measures.</p> <p>Concerns related to impacts to Virginia Beach Wetland complex, and loss of wetlands for the construction of roadways and causeways.</p>	<p>Since the time of the IPD reporting, there have been updates to the proposed Project to minimize environmental impacts and additional natural environment studies completed. As such, the baseline information regarding wetlands has been updated in Section 14.2.3, and anticipated effects to wetlands have been updated in Section 20.2.2.</p> <p>In general, the Project construction will result in the direct removal of some vegetation communities, including wetlands (Section 20.2.2.1 of the DPD). Opportunities to refine the design to minimize direct impacts to the more sensitive vegetation communities and wetlands will be incorporated as the design progresses. Direct effects to these features will be quantified during the Detail Design phase (e.g., the area of each vegetation type to be removed), and associated mitigation, restoration and/or compensation measures will be confirmed at that time, primarily in relation to federal permitting processes (e.g., quantifying SAR habitat impacts).</p> <p>Standard mitigation measures that will be employed during construction to minimize the indirect effects to vegetation are outlined in Section 20.2.2.2 of the DPD.</p>