

## **Concerns and considerations raised by the Province of Ontario and energy utilities regarding development in proximity to the Hearn Switching Station**

**Date:** May 27, 2026

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** James Nowlan, Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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This report presents the main concerns and considerations, as understood by City staff, raised by the Province of Ontario and energy utilities regarding development in proximity to the Hearn Switching Station (HSS) as requested at the March 25, 26 meeting of Toronto City Council, Item TE29.14 – 402 and 440 Unwin Avenue – Official Plan Amendment – Appeal Report.

In TE29.14, City Council provided direction on an Official Plan Amendment appeal by Studios of America Corporation for the lands municipally known as 402 and 440 Unwin Avenue in the Port Lands. The Official Plan Amendment application proposes, among other matters, to introduce residential uses on the site. Residential uses are not permitted anywhere south of the Ship Channel; these lands are identified for port industrial, energy and city-serving uses, destination/catalytic uses, and parks and open space.

This report focuses on "development in proximity to the Hearn Switching Station" which is located adjacent to the aforementioned lands owned by Studios of America Corporation and whose future industrial-based uses are of the City's interest with respect to future energy infrastructure development.

For the purposes of this report, "development in proximity to the Hearn Switching Station" is defined as:

- the area that is currently occupied by the Hearn Switching Station (HSS);
- the area that is occupied by the Portlands Energy Centre (PEC); and
- any land in the Port Lands that is implicated in the proposed route development of the underwater high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission connection, called the Toronto Third Line<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ieso.ca/Sector-Participants/Engagement-Initiatives/Engagements/Toronto-Third-Line>

A review of publicly available documents was undertaken by City staff.

In summary, the concerns and considerations raised, as understood by City staff, by the Province of Ontario and by energy utilities focus on the Hearn Switching Station's role as a critical connection point for delivery of electricity from the point of generation to Toronto's local distribution network. It is City staff's understanding that there are concerns with the importance of the long-term operability of the HSS.

At a high level, the concerns and considerations of each party, as understood by the City, are generally summarized below:

1. Hydro One Networks, operator of the HSS and the province's largest transmitter of electricity, has identified that as a critical hub providing a connection to the PEC, the HSS contains critical 115 kiloVolt (kV) underground transmission assets that will require attention to above and below ground operation integrity, and specifically, must address access and easement protection, safety considerations, landscaping requirements, loading area and vehicles access, underground infrastructure protection, and development requirements adjacent to the HSS. (See Attachment 1).
2. Atura Power, owner and operator of the PEC, a gas-fired electricity generating station located directly east of the HSS and which is one source of electricity supply through the HSS, has expressed the importance of ongoing and uninterrupted operation of PEC to deliver power to Toronto. They highlight that the ability to retain ongoing industrial operations in proximity to the Hearn Generating Station (HGC), which is adjacent to the HSS, must consider compatibility with air emissions as well as other impacts to ensure PEC's long-term viability. (See Attachment 2).
3. The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), the Crown corporation responsible for managing Ontario's power system has announced the proposal to construct the Toronto Third Line (TTL) which is a proposed 65 km underwater high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line connecting the Bowmanville Switching Station in Clarington to the HSS in downtown Toronto. The line is planned to deliver approximately 900 MW of electricity, equivalent to powering an estimated 900,000 homes, and would include development of a sizeable converter station near the HSS, which is intended to serve as the primary connection point into Toronto's transmission system. The IESO has stated the importance of protecting land for future transmission so as to maintain flexibility to accommodate future growth and mitigate the risk of development that is incompatible with future transmission needs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry, recommends that:

1. Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.
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## FINANCIAL IMPACT

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There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## DECISION HISTORY

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At its meeting on March 25 and 26, 2026, City Council adopted a recommendation for the City Solicitor to attend the Ontario Land Tribunal hearing to oppose an application for an Official Plan Amendment for the lands located at 402 and 440 Unwin Avenue and to also, in the event that the Ontario Land Tribunal allow the appeal, enable the City Solicitor and City staff to take necessary steps to request any conditions of approval in the City's interest regarding these lands. Direction was also given to Environment, Climate and Forestry staff to report back to Infrastructure and Environment Committee on concerns and considerations from the Province of Ontario and energy utilities regarding development in proximity to the Hearn Switching Station.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.TE29.14>

## COMMENTS

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### Background

At its March 25 and 26 Council meeting for item TE29.14, City Council provided direction on an Official Plan Amendment appeal by Studios of America Corporation for the lands municipally known as 402 and 440 Unwin Avenue in the Port Lands. The Official Plan Amendment application proposes, among other matters, to introduce residential uses, remove portions of the Natural Heritage and Open Space System (including City-owned lands), and reconfigure the area's street and transit network. The site is located north of the Martin Goodman Trail and Lakefront natural areas, and near other port and industrial uses, including the Portlands Energy Centre and Toronto Port Authority Marine Terminal.

This report focuses on "development in proximity to the Hearn Switching Station" which is located adjacent to the aforementioned lands owned by Studios of America Corporation and whose future industrial-based uses are of the City's interest with respect to future energy infrastructure development.

For the purposes of this report "development in proximity to the Hearn Switching Station" is defined as:

- the area that is currently occupied by the Hearn Switching Station (HSS);
- the area that is occupied by the Portlands Energy Centre (PEC); and

- any land in the Port Lands that is implicated in the proposed route development of the underwater high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission connection, called the Toronto Third Line<sup>2</sup>.

The section below outlines the high-level comments, as understood by City staff, which are publicly available from the Province of Ontario and relevant energy utilities.

### **The Hearn Switching Station - Hydro One**

The Hearn Switching Station (HSS) is owned and operated by Hydro One Networks, the province's largest transmitter of electricity.

Currently, the HSS is used to connect the Portland's Energy Centre, located at 470 Unwin Avenue, to a 115 kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission network which supplies Toronto with electricity.

Hydro One Networks, expressed in their review of the proposed Official Plan Amendment application at 402 and 440 Unwin Ave that the HSS site's 115 kV transmission assets and interconnected grounding system with the former Hearn Generating Station are critical to retain.

Hydro One has indicated that any development must address access and easement protection, safety considerations, landscaping requirements, loading area and vehicle access, underground infrastructure protection, and development requirements adjacent to the HSS<sup>3</sup>.

### **Portlands Energy Centre (PEC) - Atura Power**

The Portlands Energy Centre is owned and operated by Atura Power, a 550 MW natural-gas fired combined cycle power generating station located on 12 hectares of land located at 470 Unwin Avenue in the Port Lands industrial area which lie immediately east of the HSS.

Atura Power has expressed the importance of the ongoing and uninterrupted operation of PEC to deliver power to Toronto. They highlight that the ability to retain ongoing industrial operations in proximity to the Hearn Generating Station (HGS), which is adjacent to the HSS, must consider the impact of all sources of local air emissions as well as other impacts to ensure PEC's long-term viability.

### **Toronto Third Line - Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM)**

The Independent Electricity System Operator has identified the Toronto Third Line (TTL) as critical infrastructure needed to reinforce electricity supply to Toronto and support forecasted growth in electricity demand.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ieso.ca/Sector-Participants/Engagement-Initiatives/Engagements/Toronto-Third-Line>

<sup>3</sup> Communication from Han Zhang, Hydro One Networks Inc

On June 4, 2025<sup>4</sup>, the Province announced that it would be working with the City of Toronto in bringing the "third electricity transmission line" into Downtown Toronto. Subsequently, on January 7, 2026<sup>5</sup>, the Province announced its intent to proceed with the transmission project and directed IESO to launch a process to design, build and operate the line. The TTL is proposed as an approximately 65 km underwater high-voltage direct current transmission line connecting the Bowmanville Switching Station in Clarington to the Hearn Switching Station in downtown Toronto. The line is planned to deliver approximately 900 MW of electricity, equivalent to powering an estimated 900,000 homes, and would include development of a sizeable converter station near the Hearn Switching Station, which is intended to serve as the primary connection point into Toronto's transmission system. The project would also require associated upgrades to the local transmission network to accommodate additional electricity supply and improve grid reliability and resiliency. Converter station facilities are anticipated to be enclosed within buildings located on vacant and/or former industrial lands.

The IESO is initiating a competitive procurement process to select a transmitter to design, build, own, and operate the project, with a targeted in-service date of 2037 or earlier. Over the coming decade, the project will proceed through planning, consultation, environmental review, regulatory approvals, procurement, and construction phases.

As part of the process of identifying the best route for the TTL, the IESO and the MEM are in the early stages of initiating a joint study to identify land requirements for the TTL until a proponent is selected.

The IESO has stated the importance of protecting land for future transmission so as to maintain flexibility to accommodate future growth and mitigate the risk of development that is incompatible with future transmission needs.

## **Conclusion**

The Hearn Switching Station is a critical connection point for delivery of electricity from outside Toronto to Toronto's local distribution network serving the broader Toronto area's residents and businesses. The Province of Ontario and energy utilities have articulated that any works in proximity of the Hearn Switching Station consider and protect its current and future functional operability as a key electrical connection point.

## **CONTACT**

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4 <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1005992/ontario-and-toronto-building-historic-third-transmission-line-to-power-downtown-toronto>

5 <https://www.ieso.ca/Sector-Participants/Engagement-Initiatives/Engagements/Toronto-Third-Line>

## **SIGNATURE**

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James Nowlan  
Executive Director  
Environment, Climate and Forestry

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1: Letter from Senior Real Estate Coordinator to City Planning Division and Infrastructure Services from Hydro One Networks, February 13, 2026

Attachment 2: Atura Power Party Status Request Letter, February 27, 2026