

**To:** Members of the Growth Standing Committee

City of Thunder Bay

500 Donald Street East

Thunder Bay, ON P7E 5V3

**From:** Margaret Woods MD,

1447 Silver Harbour Dr. Shuniah, ON

Property owner: 224 St. James St. Thunder Bay, ON

Date: Oct 21th, 2025

**Subject: Health and Climate Costs of the Proposed Versorium Central Ave Gas-Fired Generating Station in Thunder Bay**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As a Thunder Bay resident, retired physician and member of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) Ontario, I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition to the proposal to construct a new gas-fired generating station on Central Ave in Thunder Bay. From a public health perspective, this project risks undermining both community well-being and climate resilience at a time when healthier, non-emitting alternatives are available.

**1. Air Pollution and Health Impacts**

Gas combustion emits nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), and volatile organic compounds. These pollutants are linked to respiratory illness, asthma exacerbations, cardiovascular disease, and premature death. The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) has estimated that air pollution costs Canadians over \$8 billion annually in health-care expenses and productivity loss. Even brief exposures during “peak generation” periods can trigger acute health episodes in vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, and people with chronic illness.

**2. Methane and Climate-Related Health Risks**

Natural gas is primarily methane—a greenhouse gas more than 80 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 20-year period. Methane leakage across the supply chain significantly reduces any perceived “clean” advantage. Climate change is the greatest health crisis we face, and Thunder Bay is no exception. We have seen the effects in Northwestern Ontario through extreme weather, wildfire smoke, and heat-related illness—all of which carry escalating health and emergency response costs.

**3. Hydrogen “Readiness” Does Not Equal Health or Climate Readiness**

While described as “hydrogen-ready,” there is currently no regional infrastructure or supply of green hydrogen in Northwestern Ontario. Unless the City ensures a credible plan and timeline for zero-emission fuel conversion, this plant would likely lock the region into fossil gas use for decades.

#### **4. Public Health Alternatives Exist**

Clean alternatives—such as battery energy storage, distributed renewables, and demand-side management—can meet peak demand needs without producing harmful local emissions. Ontario’s Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) has begun procuring these non-emitting resources elsewhere; Thunder Bay can and should demand the same standard.

#### **5. The Moral and Fiscal Imperative**

Every tonne of greenhouse gas emitted today adds to the future burden on our health system. Municipalities like Thunder Bay bear downstream costs through heat emergencies, poor air quality advisories, and increased hospital visits. Investing in new fossil infrastructure now transfers those costs to local taxpayers and future generations.

#### **In Closing**

I urge the Growth Standing Committee to reject the proposed Versorium Central Ave gas-fired generating station or, at minimum, to require a comprehensive Health and Climate Impact Assessment prior to municipal support. Protecting the air we breathe and the stability of our climate is the most cost-effective health intervention available to us.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership on issues that affect the health and sustainability of our community.

Sincerely,

Margaret Woods retired family physician, Thunder Bay

co-chair, Thunder Bay Climate Transition Collaborative

Member, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) Ontario

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co-signatures include:

Dr. Katrina Ward, family physician Thunder Bay

Dr. Suzanne Allain, psychiatrist, Thunder Bay

Dr. Lynn Pratt, retired family physician, Thunder Bay