



PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS ONTARIO

**AWARD OF MERIT**

2020 Recipient



**STEVE HOLYSH, P.GEO.**

PROUDLY P.GEO.



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Steve Holysh graduated from the University of Toronto in 1985. During undergrad years, Steve recalls reading through the Toronto Star and seeing, what were then, the early media stories of groundwater contamination at Grassy Narrows in Northern Ontario, which unfortunately persisted to this day. Those stories carried opinions from an “environmental geologist”. Noting that there were career options for geologists other than the more well-travelled paths of oil or mining, Steve opted to travel to the University of Alberta to complete a Masters degree in Petroleum Hydrogeology.

Upon graduation Steve spent five years “learning the ropes” of consulting at Gartner Lee Ltd. Late one night while finishing up a report, Steve found a job add on his boss’ desk. Halton Region was looking for a hydrogeologist, which he found interesting. Never thinking that the boss could be sending him signals, Steve applied and wound up as one of the early public sector hydrogeologists outside of the provincial government. Incidentally, his boss later did confirm that Gartner Lee was trying to second someone from the company to Halton Region so no signals were being sent. Steve went on to initiate and lead the Region’s Aquifer Management Plan, a comprehensive, long-range initiative to understand and manage groundwater resources in the Region. In 2001, Steve was lured away to champion the York Peel Durham Toronto (YPDT) – Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition (CAMC) Groundwater Management Strategy Study, a 13-agency partnership groundwater management strategy that stretched across a broad part of South-Central Ontario. With a physiographic focus on the Oak Ridges Moraine, the program has more recently been re-branded as the Oak Ridges Moraine Groundwater Program (ORMGP).

The program is recognized well beyond Ontario’s borders as a leading-edge hydrogeological centre of excellence. The program has two key unique aspects:

- 1) Focus on careful, comprehensive and active data management
- 2) Making this data, along with interpretations, knowledge and insights, available to practitioners via the ORMGP web portal.

Steve’s goal, along with that of his dedicated and insightful colleagues, is to build a long-standing and trusted geological and hydrological framework model, which all of Ontario’s hydrogeologists can contribute to and benefit from and a legacy for future P.Geo.’s. The outcome is better water management decisions for Ontario.

In addition to his work activities, Steve served as the President of the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) Canadian National Chapter from 2000 to 2007, overseeing the introduction of scientific conferences, which finally created a healthy financial situation for the Association. Steve also co-chaired the successful 2012 IAH International Conference “Confronting Global Change” in Niagara Falls, which brought over 900 hydrogeologists to Ontario from the world over. Steve served on Ontario’s Technical Experts Committee in the formative days of Source Water Protection, and also contributed to the landmark 2009 Council of Canadian Academies Report - “The Sustainable Management of Groundwater in Canada”.

**PROUDLY P.GEO.**