



Ontario Energy Board

Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario

Backgrounder

A NEW OEB CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Giving Ontario Energy Consumers a Stronger Voice

The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) believes residential consumers and local small businesses deserve to have a stronger voice in its decision-making. The more input we get from consumers, the more our decisions will reflect their needs and priorities.

We are making our processes friendlier and easier to access with our Consumer Engagement Framework. It is a new, more comprehensive approach for engaging and empowering electricity and natural gas consumers throughout the OEB's decision-making process. It is designed to build consumer awareness, provide consumers with simpler information and make it easier for consumers to meaningfully participate in OEB hearings.

Participation Will Be Easier and More Accessible

New opportunities and ways to participate include an enhanced consumer website, meetings and hearings within the community affected by OEB decisions, regional consumer representatives, a new dedicated OEB contact person, and new expanded notification systems. This is in addition to our existing engagement tools, which include local newspaper notices, web postings, letters of comment and the ability to become an intervenor.

Building On A Strong Intervenor Model

Broader consumer interests are well represented in the current model but individuals and small business, at the local level, need a stronger voice. The current intervenor model will continue to ensure those broader interests are heard and will be complemented by the OEB's new framework giving individuals more opportunities to participate directly.

Breaking Down Barriers

Individuals have always been welcomed to participate. But the OEB's current decision-making process is a formal, legalistic "hearing" process that takes place in a court-like setting. It can be intimidating. OEB hearings are also in Toronto, making it difficult for people across Ontario to attend the hearings.

A Better System in the Public Interest

Our goal is for consumers to be able to more meaningfully participate in the decisions that affect their pocketbooks. More specifically, consumers:

- Will have new ways to get involved
- Will have access to better information to find out about things that matter to them, like rate changes and the utility service they can expect to receive for those rates
- Can find out whether their utilities have applications with the OEB that may affect them
- Can find out how to get involved and have their voices heard
- Should better understand what they are getting for their money, and the value utilities are delivering

Local Utilities Must Continue to Consult

Utilities are currently expected to consult with consumers in the development of their applications. Their process will be complemented with the new framework as they are asked to participate in OEB's community meetings and present their applications when hearings are held in their service territories. And, they will still be required to consult with their customers to gather input for rate applications.

Next Steps

The OEB plans to finalize the details of the new Consumer Engagement Framework by fall 2016. It is a work in progress and the OEB is currently seeking feedback from intervenors, industry and very shortly from consumers as well.

Some of the consumer engagement tools will be available in the fall of 2016, like community meetings and expanded notification channels. The balance of framework is expected to be completed over the next year.

We Want To Hear From You

For more information:

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