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For Immediate Release

June 1, 2015

Consumers come first in OEB review of Ontario's retail energy markets

Toronto, ON - Today, the OEB released its report "Consumers Come First: A Report of the Ontario Energy Board on the Effectiveness of the *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010*." The report was prepared at the request of the Minister of Energy, and sets out the OEB's assessment of how well the *Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010* (ECPA) has worked since 2011 to protect the interests of residential and small business consumers in their dealings with energy retailers.

The OEB's overall assessment is that the ECPA has generally been effective in improving consumer protection in the retail energy markets, but that problems persist. The OEB is recommending 14 new measures that will provide a stronger framework for consumer protection.

"Our review clearly shows that consumers are still vulnerable in the retail energy markets," says Rosemarie Leclair, OEB Chair & CEO. "Tougher rules are needed in key areas to better inform and protect consumers."

One of those key areas is door-to-door sales, which the OEB recommends be banned for residential consumers. Sales agent conduct at the door is still an important source of complaints made to the OEB and an ongoing subject of the OEB's compliance activities.

"Consumers have told us they like having the option to choose a retail energy contract, but the message we heard throughout our review is that well-informed decisions just can't be made at the doorstep," continues Leclair. "Banning door-to-door sales is the best protection we can provide."

Other measures being recommended by the OEB would make sure that consumers have easy access to more and better plain language information about energy retailers and energy contracts. A central theme in the OEB's review is that more needs to be done to give consumers useful tools to help them better understand what they are buying and from whom, and ultimately to make better informed decisions about their energy choices.

The OEB is also recommending that it look at additional measures that could be put in place to improve consumer protection for low-income consumers.

The OEB's report was prepared after a broad and comprehensive consultation in which the views of interested stakeholders, the OEB's experience overseeing energy retailers and the experience in other jurisdictions were taken into account. For this review, the OEB undertook its most extensive direct consumer consultation to date. The OEB reached out to consumers to learn about their experiences with energy retailers and their thoughts on consumer protection through an innovative online workbook, focus groups and a telephone survey.

The report, including the full list of recommendations and an ECPA backgrounder, is available from our Newsroom at ontarioenergyboard.ca.

The Ontario Energy Board is an independent and impartial public regulatory agency. We make decisions that serve the public interest. Our goal is to promote a sustainable and efficient energy sector that provides consumers with reliable energy services at a reasonable cost.

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