

**Ministry of Energy,
Northern Development
and Mines**

**Ministère de l'Énergie,
du Développement du Nord
et des Mines**



Office of the Minister

Bureau du ministre

Office of the Associate Minister
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MC-994-2020-368

May 15, 2020

Mr. Robert Dodds
Vice-Chair
Ontario Energy Board
2300 Yonge Street, 27th Floor
Toronto ON M4P 1E4

Dear Mr. Dodds:

In December 2019, I wrote to you in my capacity as the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines with the support of the Associate Minister of Energy in order to exercise my statutory power under Section 35 of the *Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998* ("Act") to require the Ontario Energy Board ("Board") to examine and report back to the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines ("Ministry") with information on potential projects to expand access to natural gas distribution systems for new customers.

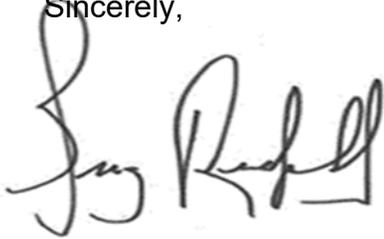
I understand that since then, the Board has taken a number of steps to move this initiative forward, including consulting on draft guidelines and finalizing these guidelines. On March 5, 2020, the Board commenced the official launch of the program and asked all proponents to make final submissions by June 3, 2020.

I understand that the Board's timeline for final submissions was chosen to enable the Board to meet the expected report back date of August 31, 2020. Given the unprecedented situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and communities' ongoing focus on responding to this public health crisis, I understand that certain interested communities and proponents may be challenged to meet the timelines set out by the Board. I am therefore writing to extend the deadline for the OEB to report back to the Ministry from no later than August 31, 2020, to no later than October 31, 2020. It is my hope that the Board can consider extending the deadline for final submissions accordingly.

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I assure you, and all project proponents, that our Government is committed to moving forward with the next phase of our Natural Gas Expansion Program, which would provide approximately \$130 million to support projects to expand the natural gas distribution system to areas currently underserved by the system. This is part of our Government's commitment to expand natural gas access to rural, northern and Indigenous communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Rickford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "R".

The Honourable Greg Rickford
Minister of Energy, Northern
Development and Mines

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "W".

The Honourable Bill Walker
Associate Minister of Energy

c: Mary Anne Aldred, Chief Operating Officer & General Counsel, OEB