

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD

---

# RESPONSE TO IPSOS SURVEY RESULTS

FEBRUARY 2023



Ontario  
Energy  
Board

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

---

In November 2022, with support from market research firm Ipsos, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) invited 214 sector stakeholders to take part in its third online stakeholder satisfaction survey. The purpose was to assess progress, as compared to a baseline survey conducted in 2020, around five categories including **Trust and Confidence, Adjudicative Hearings, Performance as a Regulator, Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement** and **OEB Communications**.

A total of 54 stakeholders completed the survey, representing a 25 per cent response rate. Those surveyed included distributors and transmitters, electricity retailers, natural gas marketers, unit sub-meter providers (USMPs), storage providers, consumer representatives, and industry associations and business groups.

The OEB recognizes the need for effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement as a necessary enabler for the attainment and sustainability of its strategic goals (Evolve Toward Becoming a Top Quartile Regulator, Protect the Public, Drive Energy Sector Performance, and Facilitate Innovation). Through a sustained and consistent effort, steady improvement has been realized over baseline measures. 2022 Survey Highlights include:

- **Trust and Confidence** - Trust and confidence continue to demonstrate steady improvement over baseline measures. Most stakeholders have confidence that the OEB develops responsive (52%, +22 pts), fair (63%, +18 pts), and well-reasoned (59%, +9 pts) policies that are in the public interest. They also have confidence that the OEB issues responsive (56%, +26 pts), well-reasoned (63%, +18 pts), and fair (63%, +15 pts) decisions that are in the public interest. Among stakeholders, local distribution companies (LDCs) and intervenors provided the highest ratings within this category. Overall stakeholder trust in Commissioners to make independent decisions based on the applications and/or evidence before them, a measure first introduced in 2021, has remained strong and consistent year-over-year (YOY) at 70% (+2 pts).
- **Adjudicative Hearings** - Progress continues to be made on improving the hearing process over baseline measures. Most stakeholders indicate that a general consistency of decisions has developed across market participants (63%, +19 pts) and written decisions are now clearer and easier to understand (69%, +11 pts). Importantly, a majority of stakeholders (56%, +18 pts) also believe the OEB is making decisions in an independent manner. Stakeholders indicate that Commissioners act with integrity (72%, +5 pts YOY) and demonstrate professionalism (70%, +5 pts YOY). LDCs provided the highest ratings for measures in this category.
- **Performance as a Regulator** - Overall stakeholder satisfaction with the OEB remained stable at 46%, while realizing gains against a number of baseline measures. A majority of stakeholders are satisfied with the OEB's performance

on Efficiency (43%, +16 pts), followed by Certainty (57%, +15 pts), Effectiveness (48%, +13 pts), and Independence (43%, +8 pts). Among stakeholders, once again LDCs provided higher ratings across these areas.

- **Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement** - At 69%, overall satisfaction with the OEB's effectiveness in communicating with industry stakeholders continues to improve, now +19 pts over the baseline measure. LDCs provided the highest rating in this area. At 54%, stakeholders have also noted ongoing improvement in our efforts to communicate with consumer/community groups, now +14 pts over the 2020 baseline measure. USMPs provided the highest rating in this area. Most stakeholders continue to feel that the different types of consultations employed by the OEB are effective at enabling them to engage with the organization. Digital sessions are seen as the most effective (61%), followed by Engage with Us (52%), on-going working groups (50%), and Policy Day which at 46% has seen a +4 pt gain YOY.
- **OEB Communications** - Among those who offered suggestions for how the OEB can improve its communications with industry stakeholders, the most common responses related to being more open to change and/or acting on feedback provided (9%), increasing participation in engagements (7%), demonstrating greater transparency (6%), and reducing burden by prioritizing initiatives (6%).

Recognizing there remains much work to be done, we will, as a matter of best practice, continue to drive at opportunities for further improvement in key defining areas.

**Unless otherwise noted as YOY, this report compares results against baseline measures received in 2020.** Responses highlight select initiatives that align with our Strategic Plan, Business Plan, now completed Chief Commissioner Plan and Top Quartile Regulator initiative. Information obtained through this survey will once again serve as a measurement for improvement going forward.

# TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

**Trust in OEB Commissioners to make independent decisions based on the applications/ evidence before them shows continued improvement: 70% (+2 pts YOY)**

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	OEB RESPONSE
<p>I have confidence that the OEB develops policies that are:</p> <p><b>Fair:</b> 63% (+18 pts)</p> <p><b>Well-reasoned:</b> 59% (+9 pts)</p> <p><b>Responsive:</b> 52% (+22 pts)</p>	<p>Having placed considerable emphasis on ensuring we have fair, well-reasoned and responsive policy development, and decision-making processes, we are pleased with the baseline and YOY gains made on these measures. However, stakeholder trust and confidence in the OEB’s ability to develop policies and issue decisions that are in the best interest of the public, has softened.</p> <p>Trust and confidence are foundational elements for a regulator. To improve upon both elements we will focus on regulation that positions the energy sector to remain effective while enabling choices for energy consumers and will continue to collaborate with stakeholders to facilitate innovation and regulate only when necessary. Aligned with our Business Plan, this work will include distribution sector resiliency, responsiveness, and cost efficiency; dynamic pricing pilots for Non-RPP Class B electricity consumers; enabling the implementation of an Ultra-Low Overnight (ULO) price plan; electric vehicle integration; and Phase 2 of the OEB’s Reliability and Power Quality Review.</p> <p>We will also consider the impacts of policies and decisions on current and future energy consumers, including both near- and long-term costs and benefits. This work will include the development of a benefit-cost analysis (BCA) Framework for Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) and other non-wire alternatives (NWA); procurement of development, delivery and managed services for OESP; supporting broadband expansion; and supporting the work of the Electrification and Energy Transition Panel.</p>
<p>I have confidence that the OEB issues decisions that are:</p> <p><b>Fair:</b> 63% (+15 pts)</p> <p><b>Well-reasoned:</b> 63% (+18 pts)</p> <p><b>Responsive:</b> 56% (+26 pts)</p>	
<p>I trust the OEB to make decisions about rates and the electricity and natural gas system that are in the best interests of Ontarians:</p> <p><b>52% (equal to baseline measure)</b></p>	

# ADJUDICATIVE HEARINGS

**Overall satisfaction with the OEB’s ability to make decisions in an independent manner continues to improve: 56% (+18 pts)**

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	OEB RESPONSE
<p>Written decisions are clear and easy to understand:</p> <p><b>69% (+11 pts)</b></p> <p>General consistency of decisions across market participants over time:</p> <p><b>63% (+19 pts)</b></p> <p>Staff respond to stakeholder needs in a timely manner:</p> <p><b>69% (+10 pts)</b></p>	<p>We have worked hard to achieve clarity and consistency in written decisions, as well as fairness of process which, with an increase of +7 pts from 2021 results, has returned to its baseline measure. We are pleased with the gains made in most areas of the adjudicative process.</p> <p>To sustain and improve upon these gains, we will, through initiatives outlined in our Business Plan, continue to improve on the performance of the adjudication process and aligned with our updated Stakeholder Engagement Framework, seek to ensure that we remain responsive to stakeholder needs.</p>
<p>Overall satisfaction with OEB Commissioners remains strong:</p> <p><b>Integrity</b> <b>72% (+5 pts YOY)</b></p> <p><b>Professionalism</b> <b>70% (+5 pts YOY)</b></p>	<p>Independence and Commissioner integrity, like trust and confidence, are key foundational elements of the adjudication process, which itself is at the core of the OEB’s regulatory mandate. We take great pride in the results stakeholders have afforded us against these measures and, through various initiatives that align with our Business Plan and foundational documents, will continue to work hard at strengthening them on a go forward basis.</p>
<p>The Intervenor process is effective:</p> <p><b>30% (+ 3 pts)</b></p>	<p>With an eye to identifying further opportunities for improvement, we will continue to execute the projects outlined in the Framework for Review of Intervenor Processes and Cost Awards, which identified initiatives to enhance adjudicative process, particularly the role of intervenors within it.</p>

# PERFORMANCE AS A REGULATOR

**Overall satisfaction with the OEB as a regulator remains stable: 46% (+9 -pts)**

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	OEB RESPONSE						
<p>The OEB is communicating with industry stakeholders: <b>69% (+19 pts)</b></p> <p>The OEB is communicating with consumers/community groups: <b>54% (+14pts)</b></p> <p>The OEB is consulting with stakeholders outside the adjudicative hearing processes: <b>56% (+19 pts)</b></p>	<p>Purposeful communication is the essence of effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement, and we are pleased with the steady improvements made over these baseline measures. We will seek to build on this continued momentum by focusing our efforts on providing clear, timely and transparent communication with stakeholders. We will engage according to an updated Stakeholder Engagement Framework and advance our approaches to engagement through channels that include Engage with Us, Energy [X] Change, the Adjudicative Modernization Committee, and our Annual Policy Day, all of which will create opportunities for enhanced stakeholder input.</p>						
<p>The OEB is delivering on strategic priorities:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Efficient</b> 43% (+16 pts)</td> <td><b>Certain</b> 57% (+15 pts)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Effective</b> 48% (+13 pts)</td> <td><b>Independent</b> 43% (+8 pts)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Accountable</b> 59% (+16 pts)</td> <td><b>Innovative</b> 31% (-7 pts)</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Efficient</b> 43% (+16 pts)	<b>Certain</b> 57% (+15 pts)	<b>Effective</b> 48% (+13 pts)	<b>Independent</b> 43% (+8 pts)	<b>Accountable</b> 59% (+16 pts)	<b>Innovative</b> 31% (-7 pts)	<p>We have worked hard to achieve performance outcomes that align with our Strategic Plan and foundational documents. Pleased with demonstrated improvements, we will remain focused on our operational performance and deliver on our responsibilities across all areas, in particular accountability and innovation. While we operate within a time of sector change, we will take accountability for completing projects expeditiously so that stakeholders have clear guidance as they engage in OEB processes.</p>
<b>Efficient</b> 43% (+16 pts)	<b>Certain</b> 57% (+15 pts)						
<b>Effective</b> 48% (+13 pts)	<b>Independent</b> 43% (+8 pts)						
<b>Accountable</b> 59% (+16 pts)	<b>Innovative</b> 31% (-7 pts)						
<p>The OEB is evolving to become a top quartile regulator: <b>50% (+8 pts YOY)</b></p> <p>The OEB is protecting the public: <b>46% (-8 pts YOY)</b></p> <p>The OEB is facilitating innovation: <b>22% (-12 pts YOY)</b></p>	<p>While stakeholders are increasingly satisfied with our efforts to become a top quartile regulator, there is still work to be done.</p> <p>On protecting the public, we will consider impacts on current and future energy consumers, including both near and long-term costs and benefits; focus on consumers receiving the right level of service at the right rate; work in partnership to keep consumers informed about their energy bills, consumer protection programs, their choices and changes that may impact them; and foster a culture of utility compliance.</p> <p>On facilitating innovation, we will continue to collaborate with the sector on the path forward. Aligned with our Business Plan this will include the provision of consolidated guidance on the use of non-wire alternatives; continuation of the DER Connections Review; enabling conservation; leveraging the OEB's Innovation Sandbox; net metering regulatory changes, and progression of the OEB's Digital First Strategy.</p>						

# STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

**Overall relevancy of OEB engagement activities remains well above the baseline measure: 65% (+19 pts)**

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	OEB RESPONSE
<p>Communications about consultation activities are meaningful and relevant to stakeholders:</p> <p><b>65% (new)</b></p> <p>Provides regular communications to stakeholders on consultation activities:</p> <p><b>61% (new)</b></p>	<p>After experiencing improvement across nearly all areas last year, stakeholder engagement performance ratings have largely been maintained and remain well above baseline measures.</p> <p>We are pleased to know that stakeholders find our consultation activities meaningful and relevant, and that they believe we are doing so with a degree of consistency and to the inclusion of a balance of energy sector participants. We are also pleased to see that our Engage with Us online platform is among those channels rated highly for effectiveness. However, as always, there remains room for continuous improvement.</p> <p>Stakeholders remain more critical of the frequency and volume of projects we engage in, and verbatim comments indicate a desire for greater focus on work related to innovation and the energy transition.</p> <p>Moving forward, engaging with OEB stakeholders will continue to be a priority and where possible we will seek to respond to stakeholder prioritization of innovation.</p>
<p>Coordination of engagement activities with other actors in the energy sector:</p> <p><b>48% (+25 pts)</b></p> <p>Shares feedback from consultation activities within a reasonable time:</p> <p><b>56% (+20 pts)</b></p>	
<p>Effective channels for communication include:</p> <p><b>Digital sessions 61%</b>  <b>Engage with Us 52% (new)</b>  <b>Working Groups 50%</b></p>	
<p>Ensures frequency of engagement is not overly burdensome:</p> <p><b>48% (+3 pts)</b></p> <p>Consults with stakeholders on the right policy issues:</p> <p><b>50% (+17 pts)</b></p>	

# COMMUNICATIONS

**Preferred methods of operational engagement with the OEB:  
Virtual: 46% vs. Hybrid (virtual and in-person): 38%**

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	OEB RESPONSE
<p>A new measure added to this year’s survey, engagements that stakeholders favour in a virtual environment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Pre-filing Meetings: 63%</b></li> <li><b>Post-decision Briefs: 56%</b></li> <li><b>Technical Conferences: 48%</b></li> <li><b>Settlements: 44%</b></li> <li><b>Standing Committees: 43%</b></li> <li><b>Policy Day: 41%</b></li> <li><b>Oral Hearings: 37%</b></li> </ul> <p>Engagements that favour a hybrid environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Working Groups: 50%</b></li> </ul>	<p>Across seven of eight measured areas, most stakeholders strongly preferred a virtual environment, followed by hybrid environment. An in-person environment was less preferred than either virtual or hybrid.</p> <p>We are pleased, given our drive to modernization, that the initiatives associated with our Digital First Strategy have largely been well received. In keeping with ongoing work associated with this strategy, improvements and refinements to these measured areas will continue at the same time as additional processes continue to be digitized and made available through oeb.ca.</p>
<p>Satisfaction with OEB Digital First initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Regulatory Calendar: 78%</b></li> <li><b>eFiling of Rate Applications: 73%</b></li> <li><b>Interactive Utilities Service Area Map: 67%</b></li> <li><b>Website Redesign: 65%</b></li> <li><b>Engage with Us Platform: 63%</b></li> <li><b>Licence Portal: 62%</b></li> <li><b>RRR’s: 55%</b></li> <li><b>Intervenor Cost Claims Portal: 44%</b></li> </ul>	



# CONCLUSION

---

In this third year of measuring stakeholder impressions of OEB performance, the OEB has moved forward from 2020 baseline survey results encouraged that we continue to show steady and sustained overall improvement. Nevertheless, recognizing that there is much work to be done, we remain committed to continuous improvement in support of our strategic goals and in wanting to deliver meaningful and sustainable change.

Effective stakeholder engagement has been a cornerstone of our evolution, and so it will remain as we continue our evolution toward becoming a top quartile regulator and navigate the energy sector transition now taking place in Ontario. It is imperative that we work collaboratively with the sector if we are to succeed in what can only be described as a multigenerational transformation of our sector. Open and transparent feedback and sector participation will remain critical as we move forward.

The OEB would like to offer thanks and appreciation to our valued stakeholder partners without whose open and honest feedback we could not improve. As always, your collective input will help us to refine our planning and processes going forward, as we work together to navigate the energy transition before us.



Ontario  
Energy  
Board



[WWW.OEB.CA](http://WWW.OEB.CA)

