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BY EMAIL AND WEB POSTING

June 17, 2020

To: All Registered Stakeholders

Re: OEB Seeks Input on Virtual Hearings

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the courts and other administrative agencies have started to conduct virtual hearings. The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) is beginning to take steps to ensure that we are ready to hold virtual oral hearings, in the event it becomes necessary to do so.

While the work of the OEB continues, our physical offices have not yet re-opened. There is a possibility that some applications may be ready to proceed to oral hearing while the OEB's offices remain closed or while participants are not able to attend the OEB in person. So as not to delay the timely processing of applications, the OEB may choose to proceed to hold virtual hearings as an alternative to in-person hearings. The OEB has decided to start planning, in order to ensure we are ready to hold a virtual hearing.

The OEB is in the initial stages of planning.

The OEB proposes to use Zoom technology to facilitate virtual hearings. In the short-term, the OEB is using Zoom technology to conduct a technical conference and a settlement conference in two different applications currently before the OEB. Testing the technology in these two forums will assist us in identifying any issues. Many stakeholders have participated in the initial test of the technology. We thank them for their participation.

Just as with our oral proceedings, Case Managers and Hearing Advisors will work with participants to establish schedules for witness panels, the order of cross-examination by parties and to facilitate document presentation. The OEB IT department will be available to assist participants with testing technology prior to any virtual hearing dates. Detailed instructions on how to participate will be made available. We anticipate that pre-hearing conferences will be held well in advance of actual hearing dates, in order to

seek input from the applicant and intervenors, and to establish procedures specific to that virtual hearing. We further expect that a member of the OEB hearing panel and participants will participate in the pre-hearing conference.

Ultimately, it will be up to individual OEB panels hearing applications to determine whether an application will proceed to a virtual hearing.

The OEB acknowledges that proceeding by way of a virtual hearing represents a significant change from our current hearing process. However, we also recognize that our hearing work must continue and in order to do so, we need to be ready to proceed using other methods.

As we start to plan for conducting virtual hearings, we are seeking feedback from our stakeholders. Specifically we are consulting on the following;

1. What issues should the OEB consider as it plans for the ability to conduct a virtual hearing?
2. Are there any technical obstacles which would prevent you from participating in a virtual hearing?
3. Are there matters you think should be specifically discussed at a pre-hearing conference in advance of a virtual hearing?

We would appreciate early input into our planning process and therefore ask that you submit your comments to the Registrar's Office by **June 30, 2020**. Comments should be sent to the Registrar and Board Secretary at Christine.Long@oeb.ca.

Yours truly,

Original Signed By

Christine E. Long
Registrar and Board Secretary