My Comments / Input regarding the:

**Proposed** **Amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 to provide the government with the authority to ensure fair and informed decision-making at the OEB to foster affordable communities.**

I have structured my comments consistent with the purported “Purpose” of these amendments:

**Ensure fair and informed hearings at the Ontario Energy Board**

This is already happening, as demonstrated with the OEB’s recent decision to no longer allow Enbridge infrastructure expansions to be funded by existing customers, spreading the costs over 40 years.

That decision came after a year-long process that involved tens of thousands of pages of documents analyzed in public hearings, and dozens of interviews with experts across the industry. The OEB decision was well thought out and designed to protect Ontarians, and was delivered at the right time. The OEB did their job properly and has shown us the path forward!

Therefore, no amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act are required!

**Ensure Government sets energy policy, not the regulator**

Actually, the OEB has the unbiased technical and organizational know-how to provide the best direction for Ontarians - Government Ministers and ministries do not! (see comments below relating to “Protect future homebuyers…” for additional justification)

The people of Ontario want informed decisions based on facts provided by subject matter experts, not politically biased decisions heavily influenced by industry lobbyists.

Overruling the OEB, appointing a new ‘Government friendly’ OEB chairman and changing laws around OEB decisions is not in the interest of the public as it would favour industry lobbyists and reduce confidence in future energy investment in the province.

Therefore, no amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act are required!

**Protect future homebuyers and promote affordable housing**

The OEB is currently performing this role extremely well.

Looking at the OEB’s recent decision to no longer allow Enbridge infrastructure expansions to be funded by existing customers, spreading the costs over 40 years, clearly demonstrates their role in protecting Ontarians from unnecessary price increases. As per the OEB, adhering to their decision would be a “win for homebuyers”, however it’s much more than that! The facts of the matter are:

* The cheapest way to heat buildings now is with heat pumps, not fossil gas. The OEB decision would:
  + Save existing gas customers money as they will no longer have to pay for Enbridge’s infrastructure expansion projects.
  + Save new homeowners money:
    - As developers can forego the high cost of new pipelines, opting instead to provide heat pumps for heating & cooling, which will result in lower long term energy bills.
    - As they can avoid inevitable home heating retrofit costs in the near future as climate polluting gas furnaces are eventually phased out.
* Gas-free houses will minimize the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and improve over-all indoor air quality.
* Continuing ‘business as usual’ with fossil gas will result in stranded assets with gas prices spiralling out of control in the near future.
* Transitioning to green home heating will create incremental jobs and stimulate economic growth in Ontario.

In stark contrast, the Ontario Government’s Bill 165 along with amendments proposed with this ACT, will have the opposite effect, making housing and living in Ontario more expensive while increasing climate pollution.

Therefore, no amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act are required!

**Maintain customer choice with respect to energy options for homes and businesses**

The OEB is currently performing this role extremely well.

Looking at the OEB’s recent decision to no longer allow Enbridge infrastructure expansions to be funded by existing customers, spreading the costs over 40 years, clearly demonstrates this. Developers and new home buyers would have the choice to install expensive polluting fossil gas infrastructure and equipment, or go with clean efficient heat pumps (or other green solutions).

In contrast, the Ontario Government’s Bill 165 along with amendments proposed with this ACT, will have the opposite effect, forcing new home buyers to use gas, which will result in higher energy bills and unnecessary retrofit costs. Once fossil gas lines are built-out, consumer choice is effectively lost, and higher emissions & costs are ‘locked in’ for years/decades to come.

Therefore, no amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act are required!

**Support the Government’s mandate to rebuild Ontario’s economy as we keep costs down for people and businesses and build the homes our growing province needs**

The Climate Emergency (see general comments below) has been motivating governments and individuals around the world to transition to non-polluting energy. Just as heating oil replaced wood and coal, and fossil gas replaced oil, clean efficient heat pumps are now our cheapest option for heating buildings.

Thankfully, the OEB has been paying attention to the climate emergency and the global green energy transition as well as Ontario’s affordability crisis, hence their correct decision late last year to no longer allow Enbridge infrastructure expansions to be funded by existing customers, spreading the costs over 40 years. The OEB decision will help keep our gas bills and GHG emissions from rising, while opening the door to the green energy transition. The government of Ontario should not be slamming that door shut!

The green energy transition now has global investments of $1.8 trillion, a growing percentage of which is in alternative heating sources such as heat pumps. Europe experienced a 40% increase in heat pump installations last year and the EU plans to install an additional 60 million heat pumps by 2030. Consistent with the US Inflation Reduction Act, which allocates hundreds of billions of dollars to green energy projects, the OEB knows that a renewable energy transition is underway, hence Ontario’s current regulatory model for fossil gas is no longer valid. The OEB decision has been well thought out and designed to protect Ontarians, and it is being delivered at the right time. The OEB has shown us the path forward!

Transitioning to green home heating will create jobs and stimulate economic growth in Ontario. In contrast, the Ontario Government’s Bill 165 along with amendments proposed with this ACT will force the status quo, stagnating employment in the province and economically falling further behind the rest of the world…

Therefore, no amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act are required!

**Other General comments:**

As we all know, 2023 was the hottest year on record and uncoincidentally, last year Canada suffered through its worst wildfire season in history. As per the experts, climate change is a real existential threat to life on Earth, is happening now, and will only get worse if we continue our use of fossil fuels - There is no denying these facts. Climate Change mitigation activities should be a priority of the Ontario Government!

We need Ontario to take action to support Canada’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030, and the first step we must take, is to stop the bleeding. The International Energy Agency has made it clear that if we have any hope of meeting our climate obligations, there can be no more expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure. Fossil gas is responsible for approximately one-third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions and as Ontario’s buildings account for 19% of the province’s emissions, we must stop heating buildings with fossil gas.

The Ontario Government’s Bill 165 along with amendments proposed with this ACT would result in the equivalent increase of GHGs as more than doubling the number of cars on the road in Ontario. This would take us in the opposite direction of reducing GHG emissions by 45% by 2030.

In the face of rising costs, the climate emergency and the global green energy transition, the Ontario Government must prioritize on what’s best for all Ontarians, not just take actions to ensure Enbridge profits and Shareholder wealth. Bill 165 and amendments proposed with this ACT is a perfect example of how “the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer”. The people of Ontario want and need you to listen to and support the OEB and help us transition into the 21st century. Please do the right thing for the people of Ontario – Do not make any amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act.