



January 15, 2025

The Honourable Stephen Lecce, MPP
Minister of Energy and Electrification
Ministry of Energy
77 Grenville Street, 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2C1

RE: Submission to the Consultation to support the important role for natural gas in Ontario's energy system and economy

Dear Minister:

We are pleased to contribute to the Government of Ontario's consultation process to help inform the government's Natural Gas Policy Statement as part of the province's integrated energy plan: *Ontario's Affordable Energy Future: The Pressing Case for More Power*. The Toronto Region Board of Trade (the Board) represents a dynamic membership spanning various sectors committed to the province's economic prosperity and energy security. This submission outlines the Board's perspectives on the important role that natural gas continues to play as we transition to net zero.

Ontario is at a critical juncture in shaping its energy future. A balanced approach that maintains system reliability, affordability, and sustainability is essential to supporting the growth and competitiveness of our industries and communities. The Board supports maintaining natural gas as a key component of the energy mix to safeguard system resilience and act as a bridge during the energy transition.

Natural gas remains the primary heating source for three-quarters of Ontario businesses and households, playing a critical role in meeting peak demand during extreme weather events. Its underground infrastructure makes it resilient to climate-related disruptions that can impact above-ground systems, enhancing overall reliability. As electricity demand continues to rise and the use of intermittent renewable energy sources expands, natural gas plays an increasingly important role in stabilizing the grid. By complementing renewables, it supports grid reliability while enabling a gradual transition to non-emitting energy sources.

In addition to its stabilizing role, natural gas is integral to energy-intensive sectors such as manufacturing, agri-food, and automotive production—industries vital to Ontario's economy. Access to affordable and secure energy is a decisive factor for attracting investment and supporting operational growth, particularly where electrification is not yet feasible.



The Board believes that the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) should seek to streamline connection processes to improve energy access for Ontarians while promoting regional economic development. Moreover, approval processes for publicly funded expansion projects should be optimized to minimize delays without compromising safety or environmental standards. Simplifying these processes will accelerate critical infrastructure delivery, supporting affordability and economic growth.

In the context of decarbonization, natural gas serves to displace higher-emitting fuels, such as coal and oil. Renewable natural gas (RNG), hydrogen blending, and carbon capture and storage (CCS) also offer promising solutions to lower emissions. By fostering partnerships with industry and promoting incentives for clean fuel adoption and energy efficiency, Ontario can reduce emissions while maintaining affordability. An approach that leverages the strengths of natural gas while concurrently accelerating the deployment of non-emitting alternatives will help smooth the transition to net zero.

In conclusion, the Board supports a balanced approach that leverages the strengths of natural gas to complement renewable and non-emitting energy resources, ensuring the province meets its goals of reliability, affordability, and sustainability. The Board believes that collaboration among government, industry, and Indigenous communities, alongside strategic investments in innovative technologies and workforce development, will further strengthen Ontario's position as a global leader in the energy transition.

The Board looks forward to working with the Government of Ontario as it develops its Natural Gas Policy Statement. Thank you for your leadership and for considering this submission.

Sincerely,

David Campbell
Associate Vice President, Policy & Research