



Nik Spohr
Ministry of Energy and Electrification
77 Grenville Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C1

Thursday, January 16, 2025

RE: Submission to the Regulatory Registry: ERO #019-9501

The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed regulatory measures outlined in ERO #019-9501, which emphasize the critical role of natural gas in Ontario's energy system and economy.

Key Recommendations and Perspectives from the WOWC:

1. Balanced Energy Transition:

Natural gas is an essential part of Ontario's transition to a low-carbon economy. It provides affordable, reliable energy that supports rural and municipal growth while enabling industrial competitiveness. A balanced energy mix—including natural gas, electricity, and renewable options—is critical to ensuring an affordable and realistic energy transition for rural municipalities and agricultural operations.

2. Energy Reliability and Resiliency:

The WOWC emphasizes the unmatched reliability of natural gas infrastructure, particularly during peak winter demand and extreme weather conditions. Its underground system is less susceptible to outages compared to electricity infrastructure, providing rural communities with a stable energy supply year-round. This reliability is vital for the safety and comfort of residents and for maintaining economic productivity.

3. Economic Growth and Housing Development:

Natural gas is foundational to driving economic growth in Ontario's rural regions. Expanding natural gas infrastructure supports housing developments and attracts industrial investments. Many high-growth areas in Ontario cannot rely on electricity grid expansion alone to meet immediate energy demands. Timely and strategic natural gas network expansions will ensure municipalities can continue to accommodate growth and investment.

4. Support for Rural Communities:

Many rural municipalities and agricultural operations depend heavily on affordable energy options. Natural gas provides a cost-effective solution compared to propane or electricity. The WOWC urges the Ontario government to prioritize infrastructure funding for rural communities, ensuring equitable access to natural gas across all areas, particularly those currently underserved.

5. **Environmental and Economic Alignment:**

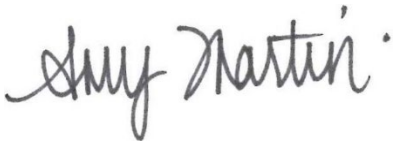
While recognizing the environmental impacts of fossil fuels, the WOWC supports the development and integration of renewable natural gas (RNG) and low-carbon hydrogen into the energy system. These technologies enable decarbonization while leveraging existing infrastructure. Investments in such solutions will advance Ontario's climate goals while maintaining affordability and reliability.

6. **Strategic Energy Planning:**

Integrated energy planning must prioritize flexibility and affordability for all households and businesses. This includes supporting diverse energy options to meet varying budgetary and operational needs. The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) should ensure rational expansion of the natural gas system, aligning with provincial housing and economic growth objectives.

Natural gas remains a cornerstone of Ontario's energy strategy, ensuring affordability, reliability, and economic resilience for rural communities. The WOWC urges the Ontario government to prioritize the expansion and optimization of natural gas infrastructure while supporting initiatives to incorporate cleaner energy technologies. This approach will ensure Ontario can meet its current and future energy demands sustainably and inclusively.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Martin".

Mayor Amy Martin, Chair
Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus
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