

Support for the Decision of the Ontario Energy Board to End the Gas Pipeline Subsidy

WHEREAS, residents are struggling with energy bill increases and need relief;

WHEREAS, natural gas is no longer the cheapest way to heat homes because electric heat pumps are now much more efficient, can provide all heating needs even in the cold climates, and result in far lower energy bills over the long term compared to gas heating;

WHEREAS, natural gas is methane gas, which is a fossil fuel that causes approximately one-third of Ontario's GHG emissions, and must be phased out because it is inconsistent with all climate targets, while heat pumps result in the lowest GHG emissions and are consistent with a zero-carbon future;

WHEREAS, the Ontario Energy Board (“OEB”) decided to end a subsidy for methane gas pipelines to be built in new construction developments, effective 2025, finding that this would lower energy bills for existing gas customers and improve affordability for new homebuyers;

WHEREAS, the OEB decision will help lower energy bills and encourage heating systems that are consistent with climate targets and plans;

WHEREAS, the construction of new methane gas pipelines, which have 60-year lifetimes, should not be subsidized because they are inconsistent with the Region's climate targets and will result in higher carbon emissions, higher energy bills, higher future decarbonization retrofit costs to get off fossil fuel heating, and a continued financial drain as dollars leave the province to pay for fossil fuels extracted in other jurisdictions;

WHEREAS, Niagara Region declared a climate emergency in 2021;

WHEREAS, the Niagara Region has taken a number of steps to acknowledge and prioritize projects, programs, policies and initiatives to show leadership in addressing climate change by incorporating climate changes objectives into our Official Plan, joining the Partners for Climate Protection Program, developing the Niagara Climate Change Action Network, holding an annual Climate Change Summit and in developing the Niagara Climate Change Municipal Community of Practice.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Region of Niagara **SUPPORTS** the decision of the Ontario Energy Board to end the gas pipeline subsidy; and
2. That Region Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send correspondence to the Hon. Todd Smith, Minister of Energy, expressing Regional Council's support for the OEB and requesting that their decision stand; and
3. That the Regional Clerk **BE DIRECTED** to circulate this motion to the President of Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Colin Best; Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford; Minister of Energy, Todd Smith; Minister of Finance, Peter Bethlenfalvy and all Ontario Municipalities requesting support for the proposed changes.